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**SIMPLE MEDITATIONS
ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD**

Simple Meditations
on
the Passion of our Lord
FOR COMMUNION MORNINGS

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PREFACE



ST THOMAS, in the office for the feast of Corpus Christi, tells us that Holy Communion is the Sacrament in which the Passion of our Lord is especially called to mind. Therefore I have made these preparations for Holy Communion meditations on the Passion. We ought never to leave the Passion of our Lord for long, and thus if you can use one of these meditations on Communion mornings, you will be kept in touch with the Passion as often as you receive our Lord.

1. The end of mental prayer is union with God. It is a beginning here of what will be our joy for ever in heaven.

2. Holy Communion is the means appointed by our Lord for obtaining that union with Himself which is to end in the union of the soul with God for ever.

3. Thus the two have the very same ob-

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ject. The best means, then, of preparation for Holy Communion is mental prayer. No other actions, however holy, are so closely connected with the end of Holy Communion.

4. What I wish to do is to show you how to read the life of our Lord in relation to Holy Communion. We will take the same method as in the first series of these meditations.*

In Holy Communion there are only two things to be considered—the divine and human nature of our Lord, and ourselves. You know something about the first, for you have His life written for you by His friends, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. You can know something about yourself if you will try to be sincere and truthful in your thoughts about yourself. Thus there will be some fact in our Lord's life and some fact in your own life, and an attempt to see how your life may become like His.

* *Simple Meditations on the Life of our Lord.*
Catholic Truth Society. Price 6d.

The little meditations which follow are not meant to be immediate preparations for Holy Communion. The practice of saving time by merging our morning meditation with the moments we know we ought to spend in preparation for the coming of our Lord is not recommended. On Communion mornings we ought to be ready to give a little more time. The meditations are only slightly connected with Holy Communion. I hope they may suggest thoughts which will be useful when we have our Lord with us.

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Simple Meditations on the Passion of our Lord

I

Institution of the Blessed Sacrament

Facts in our Lord's Life

JUST before His Passion our Lord sent two of His disciples into Jerusalem and bade them prepare all that was necessary for the Paschal supper. In the evening He came with His disciples to the room. He had determined on this night to prepare for His disciples and for all who were to follow them a new supper, the completion of the Paschal supper, and one which was to be the support of His faithful ones to the end of time.

Nothing was done in a hurry, nothing left to chance. He went through all that He had determined. He left nothing undone.

He took the disciples apart, He washed their feet, He warned them that one was about to betray Him, He let each ask Him whether he was the one, He gave a sign that Judas might know that he was recognized by Him as a traitor, He took bread and changed it into His Body, etc. Everything was done so deliberately.

Facts in my own Life

I TRY indeed to make preparation for a few minutes before Holy Communion. I often fail in small matters, such as leaving work for a Communion morning which I might have done before ; or in want of care to have things ready ; in thinking over-night of things that may hinder me in my preparation ; in not taking thought as to how I am going to pray to our Lord. I leave my preparation a good deal to chance, and just as I am leaving the house I pick up a book to use which I had not intended. The idea of being very deliberate and careful has not unfrequently been wanting.

O Jesus, my Lord, how much I thank you for showing me now at least how careful I ought to be—not too anxious, not scrupulous, but very careful and thoughtful before Holy Communion; careful to have things ready, so as not to have to trouble about them just before Mass! Teach me, dear Lord, this quiet, deliberate way of yours. Teach me to value it because it is your way. Show me this morning, dear Lord, how I may become more like to you in all things, but especially in a quiet, deliberate, unhurried way of doing all my work.

*Aspiration.—*Jesus, teach me your own quiet way always.

II

The Washing of the Feet

Facts in our Lord's Life

As a preliminary to Holy Communion, our Lord would wash the disciples' feet. Peter thinks it undignified, but our Lord insists. "Unless I wash your feet, you are not wholly clean." Of course the feet are meant to signify all the powers used in daily life. They are constantly employed, and our Lord means that we must purify our ordinary actions. How much Peter required this is evident from the way he denied our Lord afterwards. Our Lord teaches us that nothing which we do is too common for us to neglect. We have to keep a guard on all our little duties during the day.

Facts in my own Life

I AM occupied a good deal with small, insignificant actions which, if really holy, would make me holy, and if done carelessly and from improper motives—as for my own ease or to get praise, or simply because there would be grumbling if they were not done—waste such a large portion of my life. The way to purify all these is to do them as much as I can for God and for others, and as little as I can for myself. All for Jesus; nothing for myself.

O Jesus, wash me till I am wholly clean, till there is no speck of self and self-seeking in my life. Oh, how little I think of anything but myself! How seldom you come into my life! I feel that my daily duties do not interest you. I find a difficulty in praying for their success. Wash me yet more. Cleanse out the impurities of self which keep me from giving myself without reserve to you. Wash, not only my feet, but my head and my whole person—all the

little bits of improper and imperfect motives for which I work, so that nothing can hinder my close union with you in Holy Communion.

*Aspiration.—*Jesus, purify my heart more and more.

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III

St John at Holy Communion

Facts in our Lord's Life

THE simplicity and directness of St John had endeared him to our Lord. He was the particular friend of Jesus. When the other disciples wished to know anything they asked St John to find it out; so now in the trouble they were in about the traitor they asked him to find out who it was, and he, being close to our Lord, leant his head forward on our Lord's breast, and asked Him: "Who is it, Lord?" And Jesus at once gave a sign.

Our Lord knew when He first gave his vocation to Judas that He would betray Him. He had chosen him out as His treasurer. He had made no exposition of him to the others. He had been very kind to Judas, and now only to do away with the

anxiety of St John and St Peter and the rest
He gave a sign so that they might with a
quiet and devout mind receive Him in the
Holy Communion.

Facts in my own Life

I LET my anxieties disturb me when I come to Holy Communion. I fancy sometimes that a little anger which I have struggled against, or an unkind look into which I have been surprised, ought to keep me from Holy Communion. The right way to act at these times is to lean on the Sacred Heart of Jesus and ask Him to remove the trouble, and then, trusting wholly to Him, to go on quietly and carefully. Again, I am inclined to let the behaviour of others disturb me ; if one has been rude to me or unsympathetic, I am inclined to judge harshly, and this especially before Holy Communion. The devil knows how easily I may be disturbed, and how much such disturbance will rob me of grace. All he wants is to take my mind off my Lord ; therefore, all my efforts should be to

keep my mind and my heart occupied with Jesus.

O Jesus, by the love you had for St John, give me this morning a quiet and undisturbed mind as I receive you in Holy Communion. Take me away from my own faults and the faults of others, and let me be wholly occupied with you. Teach me not to forget, but only not to be disturbed by my faults and imperfections. Teach me to confide to you all that annoys me in others. Let me rest my head upon your Sacred Heart and ask you for all that I require. Let me feel your kind heart beating for me. Let me be to you a particular friend who will willingly tell you all you wish to know, and leave to you all that would disturb me. Let me love you, Lord, as St John did, and loving you, let me love those that you have given me in you and for you always.

Aspiration.—Jesus, be kind to me and to all whom I love.

IV

“Will you not watch one Hour?”

Facts in our Lord's Life

WHEN our Lord came to the beginning of His Passion, He let us see more plainly how much He wished for our sympathy. He chose the three disciples who had been His closest friends—St Peter, St James and St John. He wished to have them near Him that they might be a comfort to Him after His agony. Our Lord came to them three times and found them each time asleep. They had had a hard day preparing for the Pasch; but they had been sustained till now by the excitement of the events surrounding the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. Now when the strain was taken off a little, and the late hour and the dark-

ness of the night gave them an opportunity, they fell asleep. The only thing to keep them awake was their love and sympathy for our Lord, and that was not strong enough. So our Lord came to them at intervals just to see that they sympathized with Him in the awful agony, and each time He found them asleep. His gentle heart was hurt by the neglect, and He who would not crush the broken reed uttered almost the only complaint He ever made to them. He had rebuked each of them before—St Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration only a few days before : "Get thee behind Me, Satan, for thou savourest not of the things of God"; and St John and St James when they wished to bring down fire upon one of the villages of Samaria where our Lord had been preaching with but poor effect. But never before had He complained of their conduct to Himself. This then is what He feels, if after Holy Communion we should forget Him and look only to ourselves.

Facts in my own Life

I HAVE usually been particular to give to our Lord a few minutes in thanksgiving after Holy Communion, but have I thought enough about the sympathy I can give to Him? This is evidently what He wants from me at that time; I might sympathize with Him in the smallness of the congregation, in the neglect of the church, etc., etc. Instead of doing so, I mostly see such things as they affect me and not as they affect Him. I may sympathize with Him in the almost total neglect of Him during the week. I may tell Him how much I should like to come to Him more often, and make a real effort to visit Him even at trouble to myself.

O Jesus, left alone so long in so many tabernacles, passed by so often, let me who wish to be one of your closest friends, let me show you, Lord, that you have my love and sympathy. Give me grace to be always willing to stay with you after Holy Communion. Teach me always to sympathize with all who

are in distress, and to do it for your sake.
Be kind to all and give me of your kindness
that I may be kind to all for love of you.

Aspiration.—Jesus, make me faithful.

V

The Betrayal by Judas

Facts in our Lord's Life

OUR Lord had loved Judas very tenderly, and had trusted him with all the alms which were given to Him, had trusted Him to provide all that was necessary for Himself and His friends, the disciples. He had given Him all the instructions which He gave to the rest of the disciples. Judas had admired our Lord and had listened to His preaching, and had, no doubt, been very fervent in his attention to our Lord and most anxious to please Him. But the money had been too much for him, and he had kept some for himself; perhaps he had taken things for his friends without asking our Lord's permission. He had persuaded himself that our Lord would not mind, and he had gone on, very likely getting a good name

for charity, and taking the honour to himself instead of leaving it to our Lord. Then the temptation came, and want of resistance in small matters had taken from him the power to resist in the great trial. He had so often sought himself without thinking of our Lord, that when himself and our Lord were weighed against each other, he had chosen himself and the money, and left our Lord in the hands of His enemies. Then came remorse, but it was too late, so despair and destruction followed.

Facts in my own Life

I HAVE been singled out by our Lord as a special friend of His. I have been urged by Him to serve Him more and more faithfully. I have tried at times to answer His call. Yet I have not forgotten myself. It has been a real struggle to give up my own will. I must now be very careful not to lose the advantages my good Lord has given me by seeking my own way like Judas did, and gradually leaving the path Jesus has marked

out for me. I see now by the example of Judas how seeking and working for myself may lead to a betrayal which may be irreparable.

O Jesus, let me keep close to you. Teach me to be very careful in my preparations for Holy Communion. I thank you, Lord, for this lesson ; for showing me how the sin of your disciple was so gradual. Seeing this, I ask you, dear Lord, to keep me from the very beginnings of a betrayal. Take me in your arms and cherish me, and make me ready, if any great trial comes, to stand by you and your honour, and not betray the trust you have put in me.

*Aspiration.—*Jesus, preserve me from betraying Thee.

VI

Our Lord taken by the Jews

Facts in our Lord's Life

AFTER Judas had made up his mind to take the bribe from the Jews he asked for an escort and went out with a crowd to take our Lord. Jesus knew every one of these men. In all probability He had done some favour for many of them. Perhaps He had healed some of them, or at least spoken kindly to them. None, not even Judas, would have dared to upbraid Him if they had been alone. None of them would have dared to mock Him or strike Him, or ill-use Him in any way, but in the crowd they each did all these things. Our Lord knew this, for He knew the heart of each. But He would show us the danger of doing, or omitting to do anything because of the

support we may have from the common opinion of men. How much harm people do in a crowd which they would not do alone !

Facts in my own Life

How much I have been accustomed to do in company of others, and to omit because of that same company ! In the first case, by uncharitable talk of others of whom I ought to have spoken kindly for God's sake. How often have I told stories of others in company just because some one else was doing the same, and I did not like to be beaten ? Stories with a little fun in them, but more uncharitable than funny ; stories of my experiences, which put some one in a ridiculous light. How often have I omitted to do something which I knew was pleasing to God just because others were there ? It is especially after Holy Communion that the devil tries to take from me by such faults the graces our Lord has given me. If I think, I shall find that on the day I have been to Holy

Communion I more often fall in these ways—a little anger or snappishness, or uncharitable talk. I find it harder to do little acts of kindness because I may be laughed at. I am more sensitive to the opinions of others.

O Jesus, I thank you for letting me see this, and I beg of you to let the lesson sink into my heart. You will not ask me what I did because I was in this or that company; why I was ashamed to say my prayers or to be kind in such and such company, but rather why I did this in your presence. You are with me especially to-day, for you have come to me and your dear arms have been round me supporting me. I have fled to you for comfort and strength. Ah, give me strength to act only as you would wish me to do. Let me at least this day be kind because you, dear Lord, wish me to be so. Let me be charitable in my words because you love me. Let me be kind in my thoughts and words, especially about your priests, for I know that is what you wish. Breathe your

own sweet spirit into me that no false shame may prevent me from rejecting all but you, my only, my truest, dearest Friend. Make my heart brave and constant in the real end for which I am here—to love you and to do your work ; to forget myself and all else that may keep me from you.

Aspiration.—Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine.

VII

Our Lord and His Captors

Facts in our Lord's Life

As soon as Judas had made our Lord known to the soldiers and the servants of the high priest, Jesus showed them how easily He might have escaped from them if He had wished. Having exercised His power and thrown them all to the ground by His simple word, He gave Himself up to them and let them do as they wished with Him. Then impetuous Peter came forward with his sword and struck one of the servants of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Our Lord rebuked this useless act, and calmly healed the man's wound. Then the soldiers bound our Lord, and led Him off. Everything on our Lord's part was done deliberately—no passion, no violence. Now that these

rude men had Jesus in their power they vented all their anger on Him. He was dragged along, He was buffeted, He was mocked. They felt that they could do as they liked, and all the time He was praying for them and for us. He was not thinking about Himself, for He knew that He had only to form a wish and all would be changed. "Know you not that if I were to ask My Father He would send ten legions of angels?" He could have surprised the world; He could have compelled respect; but He wished to teach me through the ill-treatment and ignominy He bore not to stand on my rights, not to repel violence by violence, not to answer reproach by reproach, not to sulk when abused, but cheerfully and quietly to do His Father's business in spite of it all.

Facts in my own Life

How much of my life is taken up with myself! Seeking myself, looking for praise, being cast down when I do not receive the

recognition I think I deserve, repelling any word which wounds me by either answering back and raising anger in others, or keeping the smart in my breast till I can get an opportunity to pay it back. It may be that I do not always show my vexation ; but I very often refuse to do a kindness to one who has offended me. I would have let the servant of the high priest suffer the pain of his wound, and I would have said it served him right. Now that I am going to Holy Communion to be filled with the kind, gentle, forbearing spirit of my Lord, I will try and be sorry for my past selfishness, my want of mercy, my want of kindness to those who are rude or offensive to me.

O Jesus, my own kindest, most long-suffering Lord, bring me your own sweet spirit when you come to me this morning. Make me forget myself and my grievances ; make me think only of you, dear Lord. This day at least I will try, not only not to show, but not to feel annoyance ; to check the first risings of impatience ; to accept

reproach, if any come to me, as my right. It is my right and my privilege, Lord, to be as like you as possible. I see now, dear Lord ; oh, make me see still more clearly that the less I seek myself and my own honour, the more I seek you and your honour. Let me have the grace to show forth always the gentleness in thought, in word and in action which was ever evident in your thoughts, your words and your actions, that every word I may utter may be full of your kindness, and every act of my life may be as loving as if it were your own act. Make my heart worthy of the love you have given to me. O dear Jesus, how good you have been to me, who deserve your goodness so little ! Let me not be one of your failures. Come to me and take my whole heart for yourself.

*Aspiration.—*Make my heart like unto Thine.

VIII

St Peter's Denial

Facts in our Lord's Life

How our Lord had loved St Peter! He had chosen him from the first as His Vicar; He had made him Prince of the Apostles; He had taken great care over his training; and more than all, He had drawn him to Himself and put His love into St Peter's heart. St Peter did love our Lord most tenderly, passionately. Yet at the simple question of a servant-maid, "Art not thou one of this man's disciples?" Peter said, "I am not"; and when asked a second time, he went so far as to say that he did not know our Lord at all; and a third time, in answer to a like question, he denied with an oath. St Peter had been so shocked at Judas that he had assured our Lord that though all might deny Him, he would not.

Peter trusted in himself, and it was necessary that he should be humbled. And our dear kind Lord humbled him with one sad look. "I looked for one that would sympathize with Me and found none." St Peter saw the look in our Lord's eyes and all his sin was plain to him, and going out he wept bitterly. Rather than bear a word or two of sneering from these rude servants he would tell a lie, and such a lie! He would cut himself off from all communion with our Lord. Poor, weak, impetuous Peter! How that kind, sad look cured you of all your boasting! how it took the pride out of you and you became, because of your repentance, dearer to our Lord than you were before!

Facts in my own Life

I HAVE long been dangerously confident about myself; and how ready I have been at the same time to blame others for their faults. I have thought how strong I would be if I had the like temptations. How fool-

ish it was of me to think as I did, for though I thought myself strong I have found how very weak I am under temptation. But has this made me any less critical of others? Am I more forbearing, more kind? Do I think less of myself? I am afraid I have not made the same use of my humiliation as St Peter did.

O Jesus, my Lord and my God, I have been so headstrong, so self-sufficient in the past, I do thank you for letting me see my folly. I thank you also for not letting me deny you in any great way. I was just ready for a fall, was I not? But you, dear Lord, preserved me. How you have loved me! and what have I done for you? Now, at least, I want to give myself entirely to you. Make me feel how worthless I am and how worthless I shall be if I do not leave myself and my own unkindness and take upon me your tender kindness. Take me to yourself, dear Lord, and be my protector. Let me never grow slack in my attempt to root out self and self-complacency. Let me profit by

every humiliation you may send me. How much lost time I have to make up! I cannot expect to learn to love you as quickly as St Peter did after his fall, but, at least, I will give my heart to the attempt. And as he, after you had risen from the dead, was able to say to you, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee," so let me also give my heart and soul and all my being to you, my Father, my Friend, my Saviour, my All.

Aspiration.—Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.

IX

Jesus struck by the High Priest's Servant

Facts in our Lord's Life

WHEN the high priest found Jesus before him he began to examine Him as to who were His disciples, and what new doctrine He had taught. Jesus answered him nothing as to the first question. He would be faithful to His friends though they had left Him ; even though one had betrayed Him, and one, the chief of them, was going to deny Him. Though all had fled on the first show of violence to Him. As to His doctrine, He gave the most obvious answer : "I have spoken nothing in secret ; ask those who have heard Me." Our Lord allowed a servant standing near Him to imagine that these words were an insult to the high priest, and he struck Jesus on the mouth,

saying, "Answerest Thou the high priest so?" Our Lord endured this indignity and then answered very calmly, "If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil; but if well, why strikest thou Me?" Our Lord was thinking of poor weak Peter in the court near Him. Peter was just going to deny that he had any part in Him, and here Jesus is making satisfaction for his sin. Peter sinned with his lips, and our Lord would suffer in His own sweet lips to make reparation for the sin. Peter was going to deny Him, and swear that he did not know Him at all, much less that he was a friend of His, yet Jesus was shielding him though directly asked who were His disciples. Our Lord would not subject this, at present, false friend of His to any annoyance. If Peter could not bear the questionings of a servant-maid, how could he be expected to stand and confess before the whole court?

Facts in my own Life

WHEN I am questioned as to my doings, I am often inclined to answer sharply, or to give

my questioner to understand that I think it is none of his or her business. I am not particular about giving away my friends. I do not think much about the difficulties of others, or make allowance for them. I am inclined to complain in my heart, if not openly, of their want of sympathy with me, and the little recognition they give me for all I do.

O Jesus, teach me this morning when you come to me in Holy Communion to be more and more like you ; to suffer gladly for those I love ; to shield them from blame ; to take blame as my right. Give me your own sweet, gentle spirit to be ever mindful of my friends ; not to give them away if I can avoid it. And when I stand before you, my own kind, forgiving Judge, let me be recognized by you as one who has tried to be your disciple, learning your doctrines and making your life my own.

*Aspiration.—*Jesus, breathe into me your own kind spirit.

X

Our Lord Bound

Facts in our Lord's Life

ONLY the night before, for the first time in His life, had Jesus been bound; and now, as if He were going to attempt to escape, they bound Him once more. They thought it necessary to subject our Lord to this indignity in order to impress the people. Jesus willingly consented and allowed Himself to be led, bound like a common prisoner. Our Lord had a way of making everything that happened to Him real. He did not disregard these bonds. He let Himself feel, not only the indignity of them, but also the restraint. If He had willed, He might never have felt either, for His mind was full of desire for the last great sacrifice: He was going to give up His life, and all this preliminary work was as nothing to that. Yet

He had a lesson to teach me, and He would go steadily through it all for my sake ; for the same reason He would feel everything.

Facts in my own Life

SINCE I have been grown up I have been inclined to stand on my dignity and to object to little restraints. I am annoyed if I do not get the respect that I think is due to me. If my work is found fault with I take it as a personal affront. I get my own way as much as I can, and never think that others might know better than I do. Now I find I am wrong very often ; still it does not make me any more anxious to give in.

O Jesus, I thank you for letting me see how very far I have been from following your example. Let me, dear Lord, learn to follow you more closely, willingly putting myself under restraint. Give me grace to be more and more like you. Teach me willingly to accept the restraints of my life

for your sake, as you so willingly received the bonds of a prisoner for my sake.

Aspiration.—Jesus, make me ready to bear all things for Thee.

XI

The Crowd take Jesus to Pilate

Facts in our Lord's Life

WHEN morning was come, all the chief priests and ancients of the people took counsel against Jesus, that they might put Him to death. They were forbidden by their masters, the Romans, to put anyone to death. They were not satisfied with anything less than the death of our Lord ; so they determined to appeal to Pilate. They brought Him bound and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate, the governor. This handing of our Lord over to the Roman governor gives us an idea of the intense hatred of the priests and scribes and the whole nation of the Jews towards our Lord. The reason, seemingly, why they were so cruel to our Lord was that He threatened their influence with their fellow countrymen. They saw that He was

esteemed very highly by the common people, that He exercised powers for good not given to them ; so envy took hold of them.

Facts in my own Life

I HAVE often been jealous of those who received attention denied to me. I may not have wished them harm, but I have been pleased when they made mistakes and lost just a little of the esteem. I have spoken of their weaknesses. I have thought it hard that others should be consulted about matters kept from me. I have not called all this envy.

O Jesus, let me learn how good it is for me to be kept in a low place, to have others preferred before me. Teach me not only not to be hurt when these things happen, but to really rejoice, and thus get closer to you. You, my Lord, will estimate me at my true worth. The less I can think of myself, the closer I can get to you. Let me, dear Lord, follow, afar off indeed, but as closely as I can, your own example. Re-

jected, reviled, treated as one not fit to live, how ashamed you make me of my own small trials! After all, there are some who think not only well, but far too well of me. Keep me, Lord, from being spoilt, for I shall be unless I try to follow you in this love of reproach and neglect. Do not neglect me, Lord. I can rest in your love; let me not rely on any other. Grant me this to-day, when you come to me. Make me willing to meet any trial you may send me for my good in the same loving way that you, dear Lord, accepted rejection by the Jews.

Aspiration.—Draw me, Lord, yet nearer to you.

XII

Jesus before Pilate

Facts in our Lord's Life

WHAT hard names the Jews called our Lord before Pilate!" If He were not a malefactor we should not have delivered Him to you." This was the way they answered Pilate's question when he asked what cause they had to accuse our Lord. During His life it had been: "He hath done all things well," and, "He went about doing good and healing." So it is with all men. There is no proportion in their blame. Whatever the priests had said against Him had always been said in private; now they accuse Him in public and before the hated Romans. Then again, because they could not truthfully uphold their accusation that He was a malefactor, they twisted His words about and made out that He had seditiously said it was not lawful to pay tribute to the Ro-

mans. On one occasion they had tried to make our Lord say something of this sort, but He had baffled them by telling them to pay to Cæsar the things which were Cæsar's, and to God the things that were God's. This would not serve their purpose, so they changed it to mean that they were not to pay tribute to Cæsar. This, of course, was a lie, but it got them what they wanted, because it made Pilate afraid to release our Lord.

Facts in my own Life

PERHAPS I am not regularly uncharitable, but I often forget to try and hinder uncharitableness in others when, with a little courage, I might do so. I might, for instance, tone down an expression which I know to be too strong against any one spoken of, especially before strangers, or I might try to change the subject of conversation. If I were really anxious to be always kind to others for Christ's sake, I could find many ways of making conversation more charitable. Every time I stop

uncharitableness I not only please God, but I make some little return to Him for all He has done for me. God will reward a kindness to any of His friends just as He will reward a very slight attention, such as the giving of a drink of water to His poor.

O Jesus, it is kind of you to let me see how I can please you in the common, every-day things of life. I have been so inclined to think of you only at my prayers, but now I will try to bring you, Lord, into every moment of my life. But I must, if I am to be dear to you, begin by being kind as you were, and bearing reproach rather than bring it on others. I thank you for letting me see that kind words and kind ways are always your way. Come to me, Lord, this morning in the holy Eucharist and make me zealous for your way. Make me always good because kind. I have much to learn yet. Oh, make me docile and brave—docile to learn your holy will, and brave to do it.

Aspiration.—Jesus, meek and kind of heart, make my heart like to Thine.

XIII

“Not this Man, but Barabbas”*Facts in our Lord's Life*

THIS was the first time in His life that our Lord had been actually compared to another man. No one would hesitate who cared to think at all. Our Lord was the most gentle, kind, open-hearted, merciful man that could be found. “Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart.” He would not crush a broken reed, so gentle was He. He would not condemn the poor sinner taken in her sin, so kind was He. He would preach openly, and openly heal all who came to Him. But the man with whom He was compared was one who used open violence ; who robbed the poor of their small goods ; who hid away from men, and was an enemy to all. Not only was our Lord compared with this man before the whole world, but

He was rejected, and Barabbas was chosen. We would not have chosen Barabbas; we would have released our Lord. We can choose our Lord now by taking His way, by trying to know what He would have us do, and honestly striving to do it.

Facts in my own Life

IT seems to me impossible that I should ever have chosen Barabbas rather than my Lord; but am I quite sure now that I have not done so? Have I not acted somewhat in the way Barabbas did rather than as Christ did? I have often advised strong measures with my friends and acquaintances; I have forgotten the forbearance of my Lord. I have acted with violence, and so often felt inclined to act with violence, and have been restrained more by cowardice than by a love of gentleness. I have been ready to condemn others as if I were an enemy to everyone, instead of acting in our Lord's way and finding excuses for even acknowledged sinners. I have acted in an underhand

way, not daring to appear a follower of our Lord.

O Jesus, whom I have chosen as my own, who have chosen me as your own, who have given me chances of knowing you and being near to you—chances denied to others who would have been so much more faithful—how can I ever thank you enough? Teach me now at least to make up for my neglect of you in the past. Teach me to be kind in my judgement of others, kind in my speech to them and of them. Give me the grace to do always, without fear of consequences, what will make me like to you, my model, my Lord and my God.

Aspiration.—Make my heart like unto Thine.

XIV

Jesus is sent to Herod

Facts in our Lord's Life

WHEN Pilate was examining our Lord, the chief accusation against Him was that He had been stirring up the people, beginning from Galilee even unto Jerusalem. What had He stirred them up to do? To live a better life and to do penance. But the Jews meant Pilate to understand that our Lord had been stirring up the people to rebel against the Romans. If our Lord had done so the priests and scribes would in their hearts have honoured Him. But they objected to His teaching because it took away from them the honour they thought was theirs. As soon as Pilate heard mention of Galilee, wishing only to be rid of a difficult case, he asked if Jesus were a Galilean, and finding He was, he sent Him to

Herod. Our Lord had always avoided Herod, who was a weak-charactered man and had done great harm by his loose life. Though our Lord might have claimed to be a native of Judea, being born at Bethlehem and being of the tribe of David, that is, of Benjamin, still He would submit Himself to the new indignity because He saw that His friends in future times would be used in the same unjust and mocking way ; that they would be made a convenience of by others, and He wished to show them how to bear it all.

Facts in my own Life

How much I dislike to be made a convenience of ! How ready I am to see that I am, as I say, being imposed on ! I am always inclined to stand on my rights. Here our Lord allowed a lie to be told against Him ; a false interpretation to be put on His whole missionary work, without a word of reply. He was also glad to do this service to Pilate, for though it meant that He would be

dragged again through the city with a howling mob at His heels, it also meant a reconciliation between Pilate and Herod.

O Jesus, how kind it was of you to think of me even while you were being so unjustly abused by your enemies ! I will try, Lord, to follow your example and to think less of myself ; to allow myself to be made a convenience of, and not to fear being imposed upon. If you, my own dear Lord, had objected, Pilate would perhaps have relented and the enmity between him and Herod would have continued. Oh, how constantly did you forget yourself and think of others ! How unlike you I am, who so seldom give a thought to what others want, who so frequently look to myself and to what will foster my vanity and my self-love ! Teach me when you come to me this morning your own sweet way, for your yoke is sweet and your burden light. Make me glad to take up that burden, to be always unselfish, ever thoughtful for others, careless of my own comfort, my own convenience, but careful

always of your blessed will. Make me brave to persevere in your service to the end of my life.

*Aspiration.—*Jesus, my Lord and Master, help me!

XV

Jesus before Herod

Facts in our Lord's Life

HEROD had for a long time been desirous of seeing our Lord, looking upon Him as a kind of conjuror who could do wonderful things. He wanted to be amused and entertained. Thus he was glad, St Luke tells us, that Jesus was sent to him, and he gathered as many as he could to witness the show. Sitting in state, Herod put a number of questions to our Lord, and though He had answered the priests and Pilate, He would not answer a word to Herod. Herod, seeing himself foiled, determined to have some rude fun out of our Lord, so he dressed Him in a white garment, the garb of a fool, and sent Him back to Pilate. Here we see our Lord treated like a buffoon and a clown by the

basest of men. How does He take it? In silence, bearing it all without answering back He knew what a weak man He had to deal with, and that a word might make him waver and be kinder to Him, but He would not utter that word. He would not defend Himself. He would simply bear all the mockery and be taken back, dressed as a fool, to be dragged again through the streets.

Facts in my own Life

IF I am mocked or ridiculed I am sometimes silent, but more from vexation than from meekness. For the most part I am not silent, for I like to put people right, or I am inclined to retort and try to turn the ridicule on others. After all, I have so very little to bear. How differently my Lord acted! He could have so easily made the people greet Him as Son of David, as they had done a few days before, but He bears all these insults meekly for my sake, to show me how I must act if I am to follow Him.

O Jesus, my own dear Master, how badly have I followed you ! How little I have desired to be like you in the way I have taken mockery, and much less than mockery, the slightest jest even at my expense ! I have yet much to learn. Now you are coming to me in Holy Communion ; draw me more to yourself and let me learn your way, your meekness, your patience. Let me learn from you that good may come from loss of that respect I so much esteem—good I may not see, perhaps, but good to others.

Aspiration.—Jesus, make me more humble.

XVI

Jesus again before Pilate

Facts in our Lord's Life

WHEN our Lord was dragged back to Pilate his innate sense of justice caused him to make an effort to effect our Lord's release. He therefore told the chief priests that neither he nor Herod found any cause in our Lord. Neither of them found anything worthy of death in Him. "I will chastise Him therefore," he said, "and release Him." But the priests cried out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." Nothing would satisfy them but the death—and the ignominious death, of our Lord. Then again Pilate attempted to bring them to a better mind, but they were instant with loud voices requiring that He should be crucified. Their voices prevailed, and Pilate gave sentence

that it should be as they required. Here we see a man doing, for fear of the Jews, what his own judgement told him was a grievous crime. Pilate knew that the Jews were now thoroughly roused, and He knew what that meant—it meant a good deal of trouble to himself, inquiry from Rome as to the cause of the disturbance, and possibly, loss to himself of a good and lucrative post; for he thought that if the Jews were so unjust to our Lord, they would not scruple to accuse him.

Facts in my own Life

I HAVE not always been as constant as I ought to be in defending those who are accused in my presence. I have heard people abused, and their faults exaggerated, and I have perhaps joined in the abuse, or at least I have been silent when I might have prevented the uncharitableness. I have indeed offended in this, for it is always my duty to put the best possible interpretation on my neighbour's actions. It is what our

Lord Himself has so frequently shown me how to do. But when I get into company I forget the example of our Lord and think only of not bringing hard words on myself.

O Jesus, I thank you if I have not wilfully done serious harm in this way so far, but I see how near I have often been to it. What occasions I have missed of defending you in the person of your priests ! How often I have by my silence or by false shame given countenance to an unjust or a hasty judgement. Pardon me, Lord, for my cowardice that has kept me from taking your part. I will try to be more courageous in the future. Now that you are coming to me in Holy Communion, strengthen me with your own gentle courage to stand up for the kind word, the kind sentence which I myself hope to hear from you, my Judge. How much sin I may be able to stop by being on the look-out for a kind interpretation ! How many excuses I should have for myself if I were under judgement ! How hurt I should be if I were spoken of harshly !

Let me be kind to all, dear Lord, for your sake.

Aspiration.—Jesus, kind Saviour, make me kind always.

XVII

The Scourging

Facts in our Lord's Life

THE body of our Lord was most sensitive. As His soul was the most perfect human soul, so His body, made for that soul to dwell in, was the most perfect human body, and therefore, most sensitive; for that is the use of the body to the soul to put it into communication with the world and with other souls through the senses. And as His soul experienced all the anguish of spiritual sorrow during His Passion for our sake, so His blessed body was wilfully subjected to the most excruciating agony to let me see how much He loved me. What would anyone who loves me do for me that our Lord has not done? Would anyone do as much? Let me ask myself what I would do, and

I shall know what others would do for me. I know what one bruise is if I get a knock against anything hard. I am dull in comparison with our Lord. He felt much more keenly, and subjected His most sensitive skin and flesh to such torment. Why? To show me how much He loved me. But how did He show this? Because it was all for me, to cure my cowardice, to make me willing to suffer if necessary in His service and in the service of others. I do not follow Him by suffering for myself, but only when I do so for Him and for my neighbour in His service.

Facts in my own Life

I REGULARLY shrink from any pain unless it is natural or endured for my own sake. I can endure a good deal fairly calmly if it comes to me naturally, and I try to keep it to myself, but more in pride than as our Lord did in humility. And in the case of pain I need not suffer, what a coward I am! How I do my utmost to avoid it! For those

who may need my help or may really be benefitted by my attendance how much inconvenience will I put myself to? Very little inconvenience is sufficient to keep me back, and anything in the way of pain or real trouble would make my charity dry up at once.

O Jesus, my kind loving Saviour, how poorly I have taken your example to heart! How little I have thought of it! I do thank you, Lord, for all you have suffered for me. I was not worth it, Lord, but I will try to be more worthy of your love. Teach me to think less of myself and more of those around me. If in your work I have to bear some little pain, give me strength to bear it. I will at least this morning when you come to me in the Holy Eucharist try to cleanse my heart of all that is self, and all that self-love has burdened me with, and leave room only for you, my good, kind, patient Master. Help me, Lord, to do something for you.

Aspiration.—All for Jesus.

XVIII

The Crowning with Thorns

Facts in our Lord's Life

EVERYTHING that our Lord had said was turned against Him. In His examination before Pilate, when asked if He was a king, Jesus had acknowledged that He was, saying that His kingdom was not of this world. This the rude soldiers fastened on, and when Jesus was almost dead with the pain of the scourging they put a rude garment about Him, and setting Him on a stool as if on a royal throne, they looked for a crown. Not finding anything that would answer the purpose, one of them went out and made a rough crown, and then they went through the mockery of crowning Him King. They do not seem to have given a thought to the cruelty of the whole thing. They had to pass the time, and here was sport at their

hand. Jesus allowed the cruelty, and by an exercise of His divine power, kept His strength enough to suffer and to serve as a plaything for these rude men. He allowed Himself to feel most acutely all the pain, but preserved Himself from expiring under it.

Facts in my own Life

HERE am I coming frequently to Holy Communion, getting close to our Lord, perhaps doing a little work in the parish and taking an interest in the work of the Church, and yet this lesson of really bearing willingly such small reproach as falls to me has scarcely ever struck me. I can get nearer to our Lord by imitating Him even in a far-off way in these things than by work which brings me appreciation and praise. Why else did our Lord submit to all the rudeness of these soldiers, to all the laughter at His helplessness, to the rough jests which amused them during the long night, except to show me how much He wished me to bear such things for Him and for my own

good? Where would my pride be now if I had used all the chances of humiliation that He has offered me and I have thrown aside?

O Jesus, this has been the hardest of your lessons to learn. I do so shrink from anything like reproach, fault-finding or ridicule. I could bear neglect in other ways so much more easily. Teach me to be willing to suffer this also for you; to be made a fool of for your sake if I may thus get nearer and dearer to you. Teach me to put aside pride, and not to shrink from fear of being laughed at from doing anything which I feel you ask of me. This morning when you come to me give me grace to know your will and fearlessly to perform it in spite of any ridicule which may come to me.

Aspiration.—Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine.

XIX

Christ's Kingdom not of this World

Facts in our Lord's Life

How easily our Lord might have raised the nation of the Jews and driven the Romans out of Palestine, and founded a kingdom which would have been of this world! But He did not come to lord it over His brethren, to seek honour and power, but to find certain poor, uneducated men and make them His friends; to take trouble over their training that they might be able to learn His doctrine and follow His example, and in a quiet, unobtrusive way to live His life and shed forth the sweet influence of their Lord and Master. The methods were to be quite opposite to those pursued by men who seek power and influence. They were each in his own place to learn first the ways of our Lord and then quietly but persistently to live in

those ways. They were not to think of the success of their work, but of the exactness with which they followed our Lord. They were not to desire to do something great, but to do well what they were called to do; not to be well known or well thought of, but by love and kindness to each other to manifest that they were Christ's disciples.

Facts in my own Life

I HAVE been inclined to act more according to the ways of the world than to those of our Lord. Seeking my own way; seeking honour and praise; perhaps not actually doing things in order to get praise, but being hurt if I did not get it; inclined to give up work which did not seem to be appreciated; wishing to do something great for God and not contented to go on simply and quietly doing what I felt to be God's will, even though it was small and unimportant. So also I have thought more of being known and looked up to than of being really kind to others.

O Jesus, I thank you for your kind-

ness in loving me and taking so much pains to teach me your ways. Give me grace to learn them. Make me give up my own way and study yours. Make me less forward, less touchy about depreciating remarks, less anxious for my own way, more thoughtful for ways of doing kindness to others. Teach me, Lord, how I may, though only a poor weak child, follow you very closely, that when I come to your kingdom you may recognize me as a simple, lowly but earnest follower of you, my Lord and my God. Come to me this morning, Lord, and take me out of myself, making me all yours.

Aspiration.—Now not I, but Christ liveth in me.

XX

Jesus is Condemned

Facts in our Lord's Life

OUR Lord's good deeds are turned against Him. His silence and meekness are taken as signs of guilt; the natural justice of Pilate is over-ruled by the shouts of the people, and Jesus is condemned to death. He had raised many to life. Only a few days since He had, before a large crowd and in the presence of many Scribes and Pharisees, raised Lazarus to life, and now these same men are clamouring for His death, and why? Who can tell? Because He was more thought of than themselves? Because He had openly rebuked their crimes? Whatever the cause was, they who asked for His death knew that He had done nothing but good; that only by lying could they bring any accusation against Him. My own sweet

Jesus is showing me how to bear misrepresentation ; how to bear want of appreciation ; how to bear false things said against me.

Facts in my own Life

How very touchy I am about people telling the truth about me ! How hurt I am if I am shown to be ignorant or selfish or conceited ! And yet I am all these things at times. What is there that people have ever said against me that is not sufficiently true to make me satisfied that they are honest in their opinion ? I do not like to be called proud, and yet there is quite enough to make people think that I am so. There was no reason at all for anything that was alleged against our Lord. Then when I have been treated as if I could not manage my own business, how vexed, how angry I have been ! Yet I know now I was wrong and others right. If I come to think, I shall find that in nothing I have ever been blamed for was I altogether blameless, and yet how annoyed I have been !

O Jesus, how you shame me with your meekness even in the face of open, unjust, unfeeling condemnation! You were condemned, not to a little laughter or a little sneer, the greatest I have ever had to bear, but to death—and such a death! I will try to follow you even here. It will be hard for me to bear anything of the sort because I have been so used to angry feelings at such times, but with your grace I will try. Come to me, Lord, this very morning and help me. Strengthen my weakness; give me courage to persevere that when trial comes I may receive my blame meekly without a word, without a feeling of anger.

Aspiration.—Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine.

XXI

The Carrying of the Cross

Facts in our Lord's Life

AFTER His condemnation our Lord was hurried away by the Jews, to whom He had been given up to be crucified. After a very short time it became evident that He would never be able to carry the cross on which He was to die. This was a barbarity which was commonly inflicted on criminals condemned to death by crucifixion. The weariness of the whole journey brought to our Lord's mind the weariness which comes at times over all who are striving to do God's will; and so He permitted any poor fellow on the road who was first taken by the soldiers to share His burden. This was to show me how much I could do to lighten the burden of our Lord in the person of those who are in pain of any sort. Simon of Cy-

rene was a man of no account, and yet he did a real service to our Lord.

Facts in my own Life

I OFTEN hold back, as Simon did, when a very little effort would enable me to do real good to some poor, weary body. Simon had to be compelled, but our Lord would like to compel me in another way, drawing me by love of Him to lighten His burden. There are so many ways in which I can unite myself to our Lord in carrying His cross, most of which I have neglected hitherto. I might visit the sick a little, or comfort those who are in distress, or encourage the despondent, especially among my own people, and by God's grace I will.

O Jesus, how kind you are to let me help you, for I am helping you when I lighten in any way the burden of the poor or the afflicted! You, dear Lord, have said that if a cup of cold water is given to the poor in your name it is given to you. Surely, then, if I help the poor to bear their load I am

helping you. How glorious it is to help you with the cross ! I will try to put aside my fear of appearing foolish in doing what perhaps others may not understand, and think only how for your sake I may bring a little joy into another's life. In any pain you may be pleased to send me in my own body I will try to see the cross I am carrying with you. Give me, Lord, Simon's spirit to bear. Even though I know not what the pain means, I know it may be part of your cross, as all pain is if properly borne. Support me, dear Lord. I may find it hard to bear, but in your company I will try to endure all.

*Aspiration.—*Jesus, make me kind and patient.

XXII

The Meeting with the Women

Facts in our Lord's Life

As they led Jesus to the place where He was to be crucified, some women followed Him, and though the crowd was jeering at Him, they, at least, had the courage to bewail His sufferings. Our Lord turned to them to comfort them: "Weep not for Me, but for your children who have done this shameful deed. They shall not escape." And He prophesied to them the horrors that should be worked in Jerusalem in the near future when it should be besieged and taken by the Romans. This was what they were to bewail. As for Him, He had to work the redemption of man. But though our Lord did not fail to point out to them the true ob-

ject of tears, i.e., the sins of the people, yet He was pleased with the sympathy of these good women.

Facts in my own Life

I HAVE often forgotten the duty which binds me to give my love and sympathy to our Lord, both in His sufferings and for the sins which have brought all this suffering upon Him. I have neglected to rouse in my heart this personal love for our Lord which would prompt me to rejoice in His joy and to sorrow in His sorrow. Oh, how much time I have to make up for!

O Jesus, fill my heart with the love of you which made these pious women follow you weeping. They had received favours from you, dear Lord, but had any of them as much to thank you for as I have? Give me the grace to know you more intimately and to love you more intensely every day of my life Especially during the times of Holy Communion strengthen my love of

you. Let no other love ever separate me from you.

Aspiration.—Jesus, my own dear Master, bind my heart to your Sacred Heart for ever and ever.

XXIII

The Approach to Calvary

Facts in our Lord's Life

THEY brought Jesus to Calvary. He was very anxious to complete His sacrifice, but there were many things He had yet to suffer, and many things to teach me. The road was very rough. It was left rough on purpose. He was very weak and could scarcely walk, but His knees were as yet unbruised, so He would toil up the hill and fall three times on the way. His knees came down on the sharp stones and became gashed and bruised. Our Lord would quite deliberately have His knees bruised to teach me not to spare myself in work for Him. And so, bruised and broken, a worm and no man, He crawled on to the place He had seen ever since He took flesh. He had dwelt on each pain lovingly, because every

one of them might strengthen some soul to be more self-sacrificing, less cowardly. He suffered all for me to draw me to generosity.

Facts in my own Life

I HAVE been accustomed to draw back when any sacrifice has been demanded of me ; to weigh how much it will cost me in pain or trouble or bodily toil. I say, " This cannot be expected of me." How little I think of all my Lord suffered without ever counting the cost !

O Jesus, how very selfish you make me feel when I see you deliberately taking on yourself these sufferings, and all for my sake ! How kind it is of you, my own loving Lord, to show me what real self-sacrifice means ! Ah, if I had known you and loved you always as I wish to do now, how very different my life would have been ! How much better I should have served you ! Come to me, dear Lord, this morning and fill me with your spirit of self-sacrifice. Let me not spare myself in your service. As you, O Lord,

gave all for me, at least teach me not to hang back and question whether this is too much or that too difficult, but simply to ask whether you want it.

Aspiration.—Jesus, who gave all for me, accept the little, the very little, I can do for Thee.

XXIV

Wine mingled with Gall

Facts in our Lord's Life

WINE mingled with gall was offered to criminals in order to deaden the pain of execution. It was offered to our Lord, but He would do no more than taste it. He took enough to taste the bitterness, but refused to drink the rest, for that would have robbed him of the acuteness of His further sufferings. Jesus knew that many of His friends would be tempted to self-indulgence and over-nicety in the matter of food and drink. With these in His mind He wished to give an example. The executioners who were beginning to pity our Lord wanted Him to drain the cup, but He would not, for He wished to feel all the pain of the nailing to the cross and the rest as acutely as possible. Thus, instead of thinking how He could

get the most relief, our Lord seemed to have been contriving how He could secure the most suffering for love of us.

Facts in my own Life

How very differently I have acted ! I have taken pride in being able to bear pain without letting any one know that I was suffering. I have perhaps compared myself with others whom I found complaining of every little pain. In this way I have lost a good deal of the merit which pain of any sort is capable of bringing to me. See how persistent our Lord was in seeking suffering, and all for me. It was not that He wished me to be in pain, but that He would show me that I could only follow Him by being willing to suffer when He called upon me, without complaining. He does not wish me to seek pain, but not to complain under it. To use it as everything else for my own good, in His service and for the benefit of my neighbour.

O my Lord Jesus, I do thank you for

all your thought of me. How much I have misused the little pains you have sent me! I have so often lost all the use you wished me to make of them by taking pride in being so different from others in this matter. It is kind of you to call this fault to my attention. Do not take pain from me, Lord, but give me grace to profit by it. I cannot avoid it, I know. You do not wish me to do so. Let me bear all bravely, but not proudly, for your sake, Jesus, my poor, suffering Lord. If it is your will to purify me by suffering give me the strength to follow you in the wholeness of will by which I may accept it, and the constancy with which I may endure it.

*Aspiration.—*Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, strengthen me.

XXV

The Preparation for the Crucifixion

Facts in our Lord's Life

THEY stripped our Lord of His garments. After the scourging they dressed Him in a purple robe, and when He was led to be crucified they tore this off, opening all the wounds afresh, for the cloth stuck to the open sores. They then put on Him His own garment, that He might be known by all the people. When they came to the top of Mount Calvary they tore this garment off. Think what it must have cost Him ! Every bit of skin was raised by the lashes at the scourging. How tenderly I would taken off His garment ! How I would have moistened the cloth at each little wound ! No one was able to comfort Him thus, for the executioners were tired and wanted to have done, and therefore they simply tore the garment

away, opening afresh every wound, and increasing the size and the pain of each one,

Facts in my own Life

How little I sympathize with the pains of others! One here and there I may feel for, but most of the pain suffered by other people not only does not call for any show of sympathy, but seems almost an annoyance to me. Yet surely our Lord meant me to sympathize with Him ; and I know that if I am to feel for Him I must also feel for those of His friends whom He blesses with suffering. Ah, I am so centred in myself that no one else is of consequence to me. This is not what our Lord expects of me. At least, on the day when I receive Him in Holy Communion I will beg of Him to give me a fellow feeling for all who are in distress of any kind. I will ask Him to let me know them and comfort them.

O my own dear suffering Lord, how can I ever sympathize with you enough? How selfish I have been in not caring to hear of

your pains or those of your suffering members, the poor! How much I might lighten their pains by a little kindness! I thank you, my own dear Lord, for making my heart warm to you in your sufferings. Make me careful to see occasions for being kind and considerate to others in pain. Let me listen to them and not despise even a little weariness, if by bearing that I may lighten the burden you have let me know of, and the pain you have given me the power to alleviate for your sake.

Aspiration.—Jesus, make me always ready to sympathize with those in distress.

XXVI

The Nailing to the Cross

Facts in our Lord's Life

OUR Lord would suffer this most excruciating torture. The very thought of it is enough to make one's flesh creep. All the muscles of the hands and feet were rent and torn. How our Lord must have loved those hands with which He did so much good! What beautiful hands they must have been! There was no member of His sacred body except His tongue and His kind eyes which brought Him so near the bodies of men as His sacred hands and feet; and yet these, though the last to be submitted to suffering, were kept for the most dreadful torment of all. Why was it, O Lord, that you thought of allowing such pain, such torture to be inflicted on your sacred hands and feet? It was for me; to teach me that even the things

which are used for God must not be spared if it is for my own soul's good or for the good of God's friends that they should be sacrificed.

Facts in my own Life

How much I object to have the things I have made with my own hands thrown away or not used, spoilt like these beautiful hands of my Lord were spoilt ! I profess to be willing to work for others when it is in my power, but I must have the things I have made used or I lose my temper, and perhaps say hard and bitter things.

O Jesus, how kind you are to let me see this fault of mine ! I do wish to do things for you and for your service, but I must learn like you to be ready not to be appreciated, and also not to be too willing to think that what I may have done is not appreciated. Give me some of your own spirit of forgetfulness of self. Grant that I may strive to do my best in all my work for you, and then that I may be ready to accept blame or cold

praise for what I have done. Grant me, Lord, to look to you for appreciation, and not to mind if the work I have tried to do well does not meet with praise from others.

Aspiration.—My God and my all.

XXVII

Our Lord between two Thieves

Facts in our Lord's Life

OUR Lord was ever willing to be considered the friend of sinners. During His life He was accused of being the friend of publicans and sinners, and He offered no excuse when the accusation was made. Thus, though it was a last indignity offered to Him by His enemies, still it was also according to His own wish that He should be crucified between these outcasts. He would take from Himself that special sympathy which might be given to Him if He had died on Calvary alone; so He would allow these men to share His sufferings that I might know that, however degraded I may have been, if I will suffer with Him I may die in His company.

Facts in my own Life

I HAVE been accustomed to consider only the indignity put upon our Lord, instead of seeing His kindness in this circumstance. I may always see this kindness in all our Lord does if I will look carefully into His actions. Ah me! how rarely I follow Him in this thought for others! How much I am steeped in thought for myself! How I avoid people whom I judge to be below me in station! Who would ever dream of accusing me of being the friend of sinners? Yet I have no doubt failed to do God's work on many occasions, because I would not be seen with one who has disgraced himself in any way. May I not by my uncharitable carefulness have prevented some poor soul from accepting the grace of repentance, as the good thief accepted it because our Lord was with him?

O Jesus, I thank you for this lesson of kindness. I shall find it hard to follow you here. At least, I will follow you in my

prayers. At least, I will not wilfully allow my over-carefulness to stand in the way of any poor soul. Do not you, Lord, be ashamed of me when I come to die. Though I have so frequently sinned and am fit only to be cast off by you, be still my friend and stay near me that I may have hope. This day when you come to me in Holy Communion, fill my heart with your own kindness, that I may be kind to all for your sake.

Aspiration.—Jesus, be my friend though I am a sinner.

XXVIII

“Father, forgive them”

Facts in our Lord's Life

ALL through His life Jesus had been anxious to take the kindest views of the actions of those about Him. And now He finds Himself in the hands of these rough men. They have tortured Him and ill-used Him all through the night and morning, and now they have completed their cruel work and nailed Him to the cross. His first prayer is for them: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” It was the only excuse He could find for them. He could not say they were altogether without blame, but He could truly say that they did not appreciate to the full what they were doing. So with that excuse He pleads for their forgiveness.

Facts in my own Life

I FIND it very hard to make excuses for people who seem to act in a way that for me would be dishonourable. If I did what I see others do sometimes it would be very wrong, because I have been brought up in a good and pious way, and I have been given a right standard to judge my conduct by, which perhaps has not been given to others. Therefore, I must not judge them by the standard I myself have to follow. They will be judged by God, who knows their bringing up, their opportunities, their temptations. What I so often do when I judge others is to try them by a standard they know very little about or have not the strength to follow. I must try and bring some of the kind excuses for others into my judgements, and always into my prayers.

O Jesus, it was kind of you to utter this first word on the cross and let me hear it and learn the lesson you would teach me by it. It was kind of you to show me how I ought

to pray for and excuse as much as possible all the conduct which is a trial to me. Find an excuse for me, dear Lord. How slowly I learn your sweetness and kindness ! Give me the grace to excuse others when I can, and I know that you will excuse me when I come to be judged.

Aspiration.—Jesus, be not to me a judge but a merciful Saviour.

XXIX

His Garments divided

Facts in our Lord's Life

THE clothes which our Lord wore were dear to Him because they were made for Him by His mother. He was beholden to her for all that she could give Him, and His human heart loved the things she had made for Him. Nevertheless, He would teach me true detachment. He let the soldiers who crucified Him take their choice of His clothes. It was the last mark of His death as a malefactor. The garments of the criminal fell by right to his executioners. Our Lord gave His willingly. The woven tunic made for Him by our Lady He would not permit to be torn, so the executioners cast lots for it.

Facts in my own Life

WHAT may I learn here? Whatever else I may be I know I am not very detached.

I cling to the things I call my own. How vexed I am when my things are not properly taken care of! I know it is not wrong to be careful, because I may have difficulty in replacing my things. Still there is room for improvement with regard to generosity and sacrifice. I fear I shall find the lesson hard to learn, yet our Lord plainly teaches me here that I should be ready to give up all if He calls upon me, and add a little more detachment to my carefulness of my property.

O Jesus, be patient with me. You teach me something new every day, or at least you give me a new motive for something I have known but neglected. Come to me, dear Lord, and put your own spirit into me. You know how much I need your help. I do want to serve you generously, whole-heartedly. Mould my heart as you will, and give me grace not only to know what you wish of me, but strength also to do it.

Aspiration.—Lord, not what I will, but what Thou wilt.

XXX

Our Lord mocked on the Cross

Facts in our Lord's Life

WHEN the rulers saw our Lord raised upon the cross they lost that fear of the people that had hitherto held them back. He was now acknowledged as an outcast, and they were free to abuse Him. They came in front of the cross and mocked Him. They used the titles which belonged to Him to scoff at Him. They remembered all His charity, and reviled Him because of it. "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." "If He be the Son of God, let Him come down from the cross." This was the appreciation of the nation which professed to have looked forward to His coming—the nation He had specially chosen. "I looked for one who would comfort Me, and I found none." These revilings were hard to bear;

but what hurt the Sacred Heart of our Lord even more was the forgetfulness of Him which had fallen on so many. He had been going about doing good everywhere for three years, and there was not one to uphold Him. His mother, St John and the holy women alone were left to Him.

Facts in my own Life

I, too, very often feel as if I had scarcely one who really cares for me ; one who is the least anxious to shield me, to help me. So it is with many others, no doubt. Many think I am well off and have many friends, as indeed I have, but how very few have that sympathy with me which my heart longs for ! It was this feeling which our Lord would show me how to bear. How little I have done to merit sympathy !

O Jesus, I do thank you for all the kindness you have shown me. I have not deserved your love, I have not appreciated it when you have given it to me. Let me now begin to use it as you would wish.

How well I know that you love me! Let me never forfeit it. Give me strength to grow daily in love of you. I will bear neglect and reproach from all others if only you, my Lord and my God, will keep me in your love.

Aspiration.—My God and my all.

XXXI

The Inscription over the Cross

Facts in our Lord's Life

HALF in mockery and half in honour Pilate ordered the inscription: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" to be nailed upon the cross. Jesus had every right to the title: He was of the royal house of David, and had right by birth; He was the most perfect citizen, and had the right by merit. He was the supreme Lord of the whole earth, and had the right to submission from all. And yet the title was given to Him much more in mockery than for any other reason. The only effect it had on the priests and rulers about the cross was to make them revile Him the more. He has ever since, through His ministers, been trying to make the world acknowledge His kingship, with how very little result!

Facts in my own Life

EVERYONE who has authority over me participates in some degree in the kingship of our Lord, and for the most part, I think I have acknowledged their right, and obeyed when called upon. Sometimes I have rebelled. But I am afraid to think how often and how persistently in small things I have resisted the inspirations of my King. In want of kindness and consideration for those close to me ; in promptness in leaving my own will.

O Jesus, my true King, I will try to persevere in my obedience and my loyalty to you. You have every title to my obedience and love. Not only to my love and obedience, but also to my constant remembrance. How often I do forget you altogether and let myself get into a careless way ! I will try to be more faithful in future. Especially will I try to learn what you are asking of me now, namely, kindness and consideration for those with whom I

come in daily contact. You do not ask of me anything great or difficult, Lord, for you know how weak I am. Give me grace to obey you very faithfully in these little things. Let me be known to you as Magdalen was, as one who has loved you much.

Aspiration.—Jesus, my King and my God.

SIMPLE MEDITATIONS
ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD
Second Series

Simple Meditations
on
the Passion of our Lord
FOR COMMUNION MORNINGS

By the Right Rev.
JOSEPH OSWALD SMITH
Abbot of Ampleforth

SECOND SERIES

CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY
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Simple Meditations on the Passion of our Lord

Second Series

I

The Good Thief

Facts in our Lord's Life

EVEN on the Cross our Lord could not resist the impulse to do good to those close to Him. All through His life He had followed the same rule. He had never given a sign that He wished to influence great masses, or to do great things. He was always busy, but for the most part in villages and hamlets, teaching and preaching. Now, too, on the Cross, first the executioners and then the malefactors take His attention. He knew that no more frequent cause of failure would stunt the spiritual growth

of His disciples in time to come than the desire or ambition to do great things, coupled with the neglect of ordinary and seemingly trivial things close at hand.

Facts in my own Life

I, too, have been deceived by this idea ; for years I have neglected the little kindnesses, the small sacrifices and generosities, which our Lord has been asking of me. How am I to begin ? I must not expect to do easily even the little I can do. Our Lord suffered failure even on the Cross. Only one thief was converted, only one spoke kindly to Him ; only one was willing to come under His sweet influence. So I must not expect to succeed all at once. If I did, should I not take all the credit to myself ? But I will not lose courage. I know that our Lord is anxious to make me better, and I know that He wishes me to begin with the little

faults I commit against those round about me.

O my dear Jesus ! you are kind to me ; teach me to be kind to all. How lamely I have followed you so far ! Teach me now from the Cross. This is your great pulpit, dear Lord, and I wish to listen attentively to you speaking to me from it. Speak to me also this morning in Holy Communion. Teach me to persevere ; not to be cast down by failure, but to begin again ; to be contented with a little if only I am doing your will. O Jesus ! I am in your hands ; use me as you will ; only make me advance in your love, and all other success may wait for your own good time.

Aspiration.—Jesus, use me as you will.

II

The Second Word on the Cross

*“Amen, I say to thee, This day thou shalt
be with Me in paradise.”*

Facts in our Lord’s Life

As Jesus hung between the two thieves, one of them joined in the abuse that the chief priests were pouring on Him, and called to Him : “ If Thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us.” The other, who was in spirit with St. John and the holy women, answered his companion, “ We indeed suffer justly, but this man hath done no evil.” Then, turning to our Lord, he made his prayer, full of faith : “ Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom.” And our Lord answered his prayer at once : “ Amen, I say to thee, This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise.” Thus it is always—the

prayer which is full of faith is heard immediately. The first thief was concerned only with himself ; the second was thinking mostly of our Lord.

Facts in my own Life

I have so often in my life failed in my prayer because I would not wholly trust my Lord. Hence my prayer has not been answered ; and when I saw it was not acceptable to our Lord I have lost heart, and complained that I was not heard. He did not answer the request of the impenitent thief, but the prayer of the one who trusted himself to God He answered immediately.

Ah me, how often I have asked for favours which if granted would have led me perhaps to sin, would have made me again an enemy to God !

O Jesus ! you know what is good for me ; give it to me according to your will. I can trust you, Lord. You have been

most kind to me in the past. Do not listen to me if I ask what will not be for my good. Let my will be united to yours, especially in my prayers. Let me so trust you, dear Lord, that I may be willing to leave all to you. I know that you will be good to me as you were to this poor penitent thief on the Cross. When you come to me this morning, dear Lord, make my heart full of sorrow for the past and full of trust for the future.

Aspiration.—I trust you, Lord ; do to me as you will.

III

The Third Word

“Woman, behold thy Son—Son, behold thy Mother.”

Facts in our Lord’s Life

FROM the very beginning, our Lord had meant to give us all to our Lady. He had chosen her as He chose all things for us. We were always in His thoughts. So, on the Cross, He would make His will plain to all. We are all her children, for she is made to look upon us as such. On the Cross we are taken into the Holy Family. Our Lord meant to show us that He never forgot us, however thoughtless we are of Him. He spares nothing that belongs to Him when there is a question of doing us good.

Facts in my own Life

How little I have appreciated all the kindness shown to me by our blessed Lord ! How forgetful I have been of Him ! I now see as I never saw before how much He thought of me all through His Passion. No suffering, no desertion, no ingratitude could ever put me out of His thoughts. Even when I have sinned against Him He has not forgotten me, and now He gives me His own dear Mother to be my Mother. I will try, indeed, to be a dutiful child to her. "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye," is her one piece of advice. I will try to follow it closely.

O Jesus ! I thank you with all my heart for this precious gift, your dying gift to me. Mary, my Mother, teach me how to become your own child, and lead me to your Son. In you, and through you, I may hope to love Jesus. Help me to be careful to do His will when I know it ;

to search diligently for it when I do not know it. I put all my affections into your keeping. Be to me, and to all I love, a true Mother.

Aspiration. — Jesus, I thank you for giving me such a Mother.

IV

“There was Darkness”*Facts in our Lord's Life*

JESUS suffered this trial during His Passion to show us how carefully He was thinking of those who were to come after Him. How many would have to lie through long hours in pain and sickness in the darkness of night? Our Lord would go through the same on a bed of suffering such as no one would be called upon to endure. We read of Him throughout His life spending the nights in prayer. It was His custom to retire into some desert place or to some hill, and there pass the night in communion with God. So, too, on the Cross, on the hill of Calvary, He would have darkness, that nothing might take His mind from His Father. He shows us what He had been

doing during the whole three hours by the word that He uttered at the end of it : “ Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.”

Facts in my own Life

Almost the first thing I do in sickness is to give up my prayers. I say that I find it impossible to pray. Of course I know that I must not distress myself and make myself worse, as a good deal of the comfort of others depends on my getting well soon. But I need not give up prayer. If I find it distressing to keep my mind on the prayers that I usually say, I can, at least, keep my mind in a prayerful mood. I can on such occasions try and imitate our Lord a little more closely. I know that I cannot acquire habits of this kind when I am ill, unless I make a real effort when I am in good health.

O Jesus ! I am thankful to you for letting me see my want of care and courage in sickness. Help me to fill my

days more with thoughts of you during my work or when I am alone, so that when sickness comes I shall turn to you almost instinctively. I want you, dear Lord, to become not part only, but the whole of my life, that I may live ; that you, Christ, may live in me. Let me grow in your love until there shall be nothing of self left in me ; until I am all yours and you, dear Lord, are all mine.

*Aspiration.—*Jesus, teach me to suffer with you.

V

“My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

Facts in our Lord's Life

JESUS had been forsaken by many during His life. Forsaken before His birth, when His Mother was forced to prepare for His coming in a stable. Forsaken by the order of Herod and carried into a foreign country. Forsaken by His own townsfolk, and then sought for that they might kill Him. Forsaken by so many of His followers when He first preached the mystery of the Blessed Sacrament. Forsaken by His disciples during His Passion ; forsaken by the crowd on Calvary ; and now He would feel the hardest pang of all and allow Himself to feel that He was forsaken by His Father. He had an example to give to all who in the future

should feel the same pang ; He wished to teach them that He knew what their suffering was ; that He appreciated it, and that they might rely on His not forsaking them in their trouble so long as they remained constant. He would have them know that as He, after all the forsaking, was glad to suffer the feeling of forlornness for their sake, so He would surely bring them consolation, as His Father brought it to Him on Easter morning.

Facts in my own Life

I, too, know what this feeling of being forsaken is, but have I been constant in my trust to God ? Did I not lessen my trust in my Lord ? Did I not think He had treated me hardly ? Did I not waver in my love of God ? Did I not harbour thoughts I should never have admitted ? And why ? Not because I was forsaken, but because so many of my acquaintance would know that I was.

O Jesus, my own good Lord whom I am to receive so soon, be my comfort. I have no one but you to turn to ; I will not forsake you, Lord. I will try not to forget you by neglecting to visit you, by omitting my Communions. Help me, be my support. Do not forsake me, Lord, however foolish I may be. I have been foolish enough to think I could get consolation from many things and people, but I now see my folly, Lord, and I beg of you that if you seem to forsake me again I may have the strength to keep my heart firm to you.

*Aspiration.—*Thou art my comforter and the God of my consolation.

VI

"This Man calleth on Elias"*Facts in our Lord's Life*

EVEN to the end Jesus is misunderstood. It has been so all His life. He came to save, and He was looked upon as an interloper, as if He came to drive Herod from his throne. He came to teach the true way to heaven, and He was treated as a rebel from the Law. He came to heal by divine power, and He was treated as if He relied on power given Him by Satan. He called on God His Father, not to deliver Him, but only not utterly to forsake Him ; and those standing by said He was a magician, calling on Elias to come and free Him from the Cross. So also is it now. He asks for what all ought to be willing to give, and we refuse, thinking He asks too much. He asks for

a little restraint of temper, and we look upon Him as exacting. He asks for a little restraint of appetite, and we think He is hard. He asks for a little love, and we treat Him as a master who will be satisfied with outward service.

Facts in my own Life

I, too, feel that I am often misunderstood. I persuade myself that I am acting for some high, or at least, respectable motive, and those about me see the self-seeking to which I am blind to ; they do not believe in my high motive. I persuade myself that I only wish that things should go well, and those about me see only stupid interference, and a spirit of domineering. Do they misunderstand me ? I feel as though they did, and I let them see that I am annoyed because they will not take me at my own standard. How unlike my Lord am I ! He, though so grievously misunderstood, went on

doing good to the last moment, working silently for the salvation of all.

O Jesus, come to me and teach me to bear it if I am misunderstood. How truly my friends gauge my motives and my spirit! Give me some of your loving, forgiving spirit. Let me humbly take the estimate which others have of me, and learn not to omit any good act because it is not appreciated. Teach me when you come to me, dear Lord, your own divine way.

Aspiration.—Jesus, come to me.

VII

“I Thirst”*Facts in our Lord's Life*

“I THIRST”—almost the last cry of our Lord on the Cross. He had thirsted for many things since He came into the world as man—for water, for sympathy, for love ; and now He would leave us with an undying thirst for our souls. Has He ever ceased to thirst for my soul ? No ; I feel quite sure about that. In like manner He has thirsted for every soul that has been, is, or shall be. But with one soul He thirsts for one thing, with another for something else perhaps quite different. If I only knew what it is He thirsts for in my soul !

Facts in my own Life

I have often wondered what our Lord demanded of me. At one time in my life

He asked me for devotedness to my parents and my own family. As time went on He asked of me care and thoroughness in the different duties allotted to me. He has always asked me to be on my guard and to keep myself in hand. These things I have tried to do for the most part, but more from a feeling of superiority than from any particular intention of pleasing God or following the example of the saints. He has always asked me for submission to His will in all things. How completely have I failed here ! Then, again, He asked me to give up my own will and my own way to those about me, and how utterly have I broken down, and suffered for my folly ! In all these instances I have known that our Lord was thirsting for fidelity on my part, and I have only half given it. I will be more faithful in the future.

O Jesus, come to me and make me wholly yours. Let me satisfy your loving thirst for me and for my whole, undivided

will. Not my will, but Thine be done. I do so love my own will, Lord, and I wish to love yours and to leave my own. You have been kind to me in the past, help me yet more in the future.

Aspiration.—Jesus, make me wholly yours.

VIII

They offer Him Vinegar

Facts in our Lord's Life

WHEN our Lord cried out, "I thirst," those who stood near the Cross thought He suffered only bodily thirst. They did not know of the thirst which racked Him—the thirst for the souls of men. They therefore gave Him—half in derision, half in pity—vinegar and gall. This is the way His thirst is usually treated. We give Him something He does not want, but that we are willing to part with ; we refuse Him what He really thirsts for.

Facts in my own Life

I have been willing to give our Lord many things which He did not want, such as fasting and penances, and something which would have brought me honour.

He has wanted just an ordinary, plain life with family and common virtues—plain good stuff which would wash well ; and I have wanted to give Him silk and satin which I had not. He has asked me for kindness and consideration towards others, and I have been ready to give Him much more showy things. I have been rather proud of myself for doing so, but He has been disappointed because I would not give Him what He knew I could give, and might give for my own profit. . How perverse I have been, my own good, kind Lord ! I have wanted my own way always. Give me grace to leave my own way and to follow yours ; to give you what you thirst for.

O Jesus, coming to me so shortly, take my heart and my will into your own keeping. I see how I have thwarted you ; how I have tried to persuade myself that I was acting for your honour when I was seeking my own ; that I was doing your will when I was doing my own.

How blind I have been ! Oh, let me see more clearly what you wish of me. Let me persevere more steadfastly in the doing of it without regret, without begrudging you all that your Heart desires. I will be content, Lord, with the little things, which are so much more suited to my strength than the great and heroic things which you have demanded from your saints.

*Aspiration.—*Jesus, give me grace to follow your way.

IX

Jesus takes the Vinegar

Facts in our Lord's Life

HERE our Lord shows us how He frequently is willing to take what we give Him, though He would like us to give Him something very different. So in most of our lives He is content, or, at least, willing to take the dregs and leavings of our affections. He wants all our love, but when we have wasted most of it upon unworthy objects, such as our own will, He is willing to take our seared and parched heart, and to act as if He were satisfied with it. He takes pains to make our love worth something, but often fails, and has to take in the end not fervent first love, enduring through everything, but imperfect second or third love.

Ah me ! how kind it is of our Lord, and how little I appreciate His goodness.

Facts in my own Life

I, too, have offered Him the vinegar of second affection. I tell myself that nothing will tempt me from the love and service of God, but I give Him the vinegar of my external work for Him, which, to a great extent, is work for myself. I expect Him to be content with this, when He really wants not less of the external but more of the spiritual love ; much more effort over my prayers ; much more attempt to help others to bear their burden ; less thought for myself and more for Him and His.

O Jesus, how good it is of you to come to me and give me all yourself, body and soul and Godhead, when I am so loth to give you anything. All I need, you give me—love and blessing and companionship while you are with me. What should I do without you ? I will

try no longer to offer you vinegar, but wine and oil and all that you desire. Give me the grace to be generous to you as you are to me.

Aspiration.—Jesus, give me grace to be generous.

X

“It is consummated”*Facts in our Lord's Life*

OUR Lord had done all that His Father required, much more than the salvation of man needed ; and now He was ready for death. He had looked forward to this moment all His life. He had not hurried it : with painstaking exactness He had done everything which could help man to God. He had stored up treasures of grace without end. He had done all things well ; He had left nothing undone, and now He was ready to meet His Father. How much He thought of me then, praying for me that I might learn to do all things well, not hurriedly but quietly to complete all that I had to do. He prayed also that I might willingly and

lovingly look forward to death, which would bring me to Him.

Facts in my own Life

Have I done anything quietly, without hurry? It would be hard for me to remember the things I have not allowed myself to be hurried over. And then my attitude towards death is one of abject terror. I lose control of myself at once. I do not know what I fear. I forget all the love my Lord has shown me. I forget that I am made for Him. I think only of what I shall lose by death, and hide from myself what I shall gain.

O Jesus, coming to me shortly in spite of all my weakness and folly, what shall I say to you? I can scarcely promise to imitate you in these things, because they seem so utterly opposed to my usual method. I dare not promise you that I will welcome death; I cannot trust myself to do so, but I will try to-day to be less hurried

than I usually am, and I will at least ask you to help me to think of death as my only means of coming to you for ever and ever.

Aspiration.—Jesus, help me !

XI

“He yielded up the Ghost”*Facts in our Lord's Life*

WHEN our Lord came to die, He cried with a loud voice. He was calling upon all who should ever come to know Him not to put off turning to Him. He knew that in many cases men would put off loving and serving Him till it was too late. He had seen it during His life. He was full of love even for those who should be too late to benefit by the redemption He had bought for them. He knew that His cry would be of no avail in many cases, for they would not understand how much He loved them, and how earnestly He desired to win their love.

Facts in my own Life

Have I been too late in following our Lord? He cries to me to be courageous,

constant in my prayers, regular in my spiritual reading, holding myself in hand in my affections. Have I been too late in answering all this beseeching ? I have hesitated ; I have hoped He would be satisfied even if I did not do all that He required of me. I must listen to this last cry of our Lord and see if I cannot assure Him that I will be more generous in the future.

O Jesus, coming to me so soon, let me hear your cry and gain strength and courage from the hearing, in order that I may give myself to you in all things. Do not let me delay too long. It is good of you to take all this interest in me. Do not leave me, Lord. However little I may deserve your love, do not leave me, but be with me now and when I come to die.

Aspiration.—Jesus, let me hear your cry !

XII

The Earthquake

Facts in our Lord's Life

WHEN our Lord was dead the whole earth trembled. The graves were opened, and the ghosts of the dead walked in Jerusalem. Many who had not accepted our Lord's doctrine were alarmed now, and no doubt the memory of what people experienced that night assisted the Apostles when they began to preach, and gave force to their words. Thus our Lord shows us the value of fear. Those who, because of fear, were ready to repent and change their evil life might well be thankful for their alarms ; but many who experienced the terror were only led to make excuses to themselves when the time of fear was passed.

Facts in my own Life

I, too, have had fears in my life. Have they led me to make any serious change in my life? I have been fearful of some things which I have thought dangerous, such as my intimacies. I soon calm down when the scare is over, but I am not quite satisfied, because my fears return almost as often as I indulge myself. Now that I am going to receive my Lord in Holy Communion, I will ask for light and grace to root out all that disturbs me.

O Jesus, do not leave me in doubt. Help me now when you come so close to me. I will try to do whatever you demand. Let me not be even a little unfaithful to you. No one can compensate me for the loss of your love and kindness. O make me love you, only you always.

Aspiration.—Jesus, make me love you always.

XIII

The Centurion confesses Christ*Facts in our Lord's Life*

THE centurion who was left in command of the guard of soldiers by the Cross, had no idea that this particular duty was a special grace given to him. He had taken it as a matter of course, as part of the service he had to pay as a soldier ; and all the time our Lord meant to bring him to Himself. Thus, not unfrequently, the common, ordinary duties of life are, if we only open our hearts to the grace of God, special means of sanctification. If we knew and really believed this, how much more use we should make of our daily uneventful life.

Facts in my own Life

How much I have missed through forgetting that God loves me always ;

speaks to me in every event of my life ; calls me to Himself to serve Him more faithfully and to be upon my guard, oh, how often during every day ! And I think of Him scarcely at all—just for a few moments when I get up, for a few moments when I am at Mass, for a moment or two during the day, and for a few short minutes at night. And yet I know that I can never leave His constant fatherly care, never escape from the constant whisper of His Heart to mine. I may not hear, I may not notice, but I know it is always with me. What an amount of grace I miss by my forgetfulness !

O Jesus, do not cease to help me, especially now in Holy Communion. Call me, admonish me, correct me, encourage me, always love me. I will try to listen, Lord. Make me hear the faintest breathings of your love and care of me. I know I shall do so if I try. Let me miss nothing ; I need all that

I can get ; all the help, all the grace, all the love. Dear Lord, do not cease to speak because I have not listened. Make me listen to your voice most attentively every moment of the day.

Aspiration.—Jesus, do not cease to speak to me.

XIV

The Holy Women stood afar off

Facts in our Lord's Life

ONE of the most marked features of our Lord's life was the attraction which so many good women felt for Him. Not only men followed Him, but many pious women, who took a pride in ministering to Him. He had been very kind to these good women. He had, as in the case of Martha and Mary Magdalene, allowed them to provide lodging for Him and His disciples. Now on the Cross He was kind to them still, and allowed them to watch by Him when so many had deserted Him. And now He does not refuse these ministrations to the faithful women who do so much for the comfort and the help of His priests, for the adornment of the altar, and of the ministers

of the altar. The services rendered by these good women to our Lord Himself were allowed because of their fidelity to Him.

Facts in my own Life

I may have been allowed to do similar work for Him, for His priests, and for His altar. The difference between me and the holy women is principally this, that they seem to have forgotten themselves in their service of God, and I always bear myself in mind. I like to count up my services before others. I am fond of saying : "I have always done so and so"—looked after this society, attended to the altar, worked vestments, and so on, and by so doing I have, to some extent, taken myself out of the company of the holy women.

O Jesus, I thank you that you have not refused my little services ; that you have given me strength and time to do these little things for you. Let me be

more whole-hearted in that service. Teach me when you come to me this morning to have a great and constant devotion to you in the Blessed Sacrament, and to minister to you in all that concerns It.

Aspiration. — Jesus, make me more whole-hearted.

XV

Mary Magdalen*Facts in our Lord's Life*

OUR Lord's intercourse with Magdalen began just at the end of His life. He had known Lazarus and his sister Martha, and had heard of the sad ruin that Mary, their sister, was making of her life ; and so He rejoiced to see her in the crowd when He was speaking to the people on one occasion. He said something which sounded, perhaps, quite ordinary to the rest, but it went straight to her heart ; and a few days after she, poor, trembling sinner, came into the banqueting-hall where He was dining with one of the Pharisees, and offered to anoint His head and wash His feet. Though the guests would have repulsed her, He spoke kindly to her and of her, and gained her

for ever to God. Whoever might stay away from the Cross, she must be there, silent and collected, when all was confusion. She must see all that she could of the last moments of her Friend and Benefactor.

Facts in my own Life

I have not sinned as Magdalen, nor have I turned to God with the fervour that characterized her conversion, yet I have been loved by our Lord and cared for much more than I deserved. I have not learnt, as Magdalen did, to put aside all thought of self in my devotion to our Lord. I can yet come and commune with Him, as I hope to do this morning, and I will try to learn from Him what He taught Magdalen—to abandon all self in my dealings with our Lord and to put aside fear when I can, by my devotion to Him, help any of His servants to love Him better.

O Jesus, how kind of you to let me

come to you as you allowed Mary Magdalen! Let me live in your presence and give me the grace to speak to you silently, as she did. And as she stood by your Cross, so help me by your presence now and especially at the hour of my death.

Aspiration.—O Jesus, let me live in your presence.

XVI

The Jews go to Pilate*Facts in our Lord's Life*

THE Jews were anxious to have the bodies removed lest the criminals, among whom the Holiest was classed, should defile the Sabbath. But the soldiers found that Jesus was already dead, and so they did not break His legs, as they did those of the thieves. Having put the two thieves out of misery, they reported to Pilate that Jesus was dead. Under the guise of a careful keeping of the law, these men wished to commit this outrage on the body of our Lord, but were prevented. So we, under cover of a regard for religion, sometimes do great harm and give great offence. The rule which ought to be ours, as it seems to have been our Lord's, is that in matters of

faith we are to be firm, but in matters of our own practice we are not to persist in them, howsoever good they may be, to the annoyance of others. It is not admirable to keep people waiting when the only excuse we can give is that we have some pious work to perform which we ought to have done before.

Facts in my own Life

I may not have anything to accuse myself of in this matter ; I may not obtrude my devotions, but, again, I sometimes omit them for other people's convenience when I ought to have performed them before. I can always find time if I only take care, and that without causing any inconvenience.

O Jesus, make me feel with you hanging dead upon the Cross and only saved from further outrage because you were dead. I want to live as you would have me—thoughtful for others, but not forgetful of you. Make me particular about what-

ever I have offered to you—my prayers, my meditation, spiritual reading. Grant me a little more care to seize opportunities of visiting the poor. Teach me when you come to me this morning how to do this, dear Lord.

Aspiration.—Jesus, grant that I may never insult you in the person of your poor.

XVII

Joseph of Arimathea*Facts in our Lord's Life*

JOSEPH of Arimathea was attracted to our Lord very soon after He began to teach. Joseph was rich and in a good position, a member of the great council of the Jews. He had watched with feeling the chief acts of the Passion. He had resented, as far as he dared, the iniquity of our Lord's condemnation, and he had followed Him all the way to Calvary, secretly sympathizing with Him. And now, being touched with grace, he casts aside fear, and going boldly to Pilate, asks for the body of our Lord, and obtains permission to remove it. The Apostles are dazed with what has happened, and do not think of this last office for their Master. Perhaps if they had

asked it would not have been allowed them. Joseph knows them well enough to recognize that he can get little or no assistance from them, so, taking some of his own men and relying on the holy women to perform the last offices, he goes to Calvary and takes down the body of our Lord.

Facts in my own Life

I, too, have served God secretly in many ways for fear, not of the Jews, but of my own friends or relations. I have been so afraid of being thought pious or peculiar, and this fear has sometimes made me silent when I felt I ought to witness the faith that was in me. I have been for the most part anxious to serve the Body of my Lord and to take care of It in the Blessed Sacrament, but even here there has been a lack of boldness of courage, and I have been afraid to associate others with me in the work, partly from the fear of having my plans upset

and partly in order that I may have cause for self-congratulation in being the only one to do the work.

O Jesus, let me also work for you publicly if it be your will. Let me imitate St. Joseph and cast aside all fear, especially when I find your interest demands the boldness from me. Never let me omit a single Communion for fear of what others will say. I wish to be yours, yours only, yours always in secret, and in public to do your work.

Aspiration.—Jesus, make me bold in your service.

XVIII

“Joseph took the Body”*Facts in our Lord's Life*

THE Evangelists tell us a good deal about the shroud in which our Lord's body was wrapped. It was fine, costly, and clean. It was supplied by our Lord's friend ; it was bought for the purpose. Our Lord would be beholden to His friends for all. He knew that many were willing to make small sacrifices for His sake, and He was very willing that they should do so. He wished us to recognize the value He placed upon our thought and care for Him. After He had risen His angels were very careful of the shroud, and so when St. Peter looked into the sepulchre we are told that he found “the linen cloths laid by themselves.”

Facts in my own Life

I may not be able to accuse myself of much neglect in this matter, though I have seldom been on the look-out for occasions of exercising little offices for our Lord. When I have known of His wants in the church and on the altar I have rather considered the priests who served Him than the Lord who required attention. I have looked for recognition in the little gifts I have made—not from the Lord to whom they were offered, for I was assured of that, but recognition from the priests and others ; and if my efforts have not received the amount of recognition which I thought due I have allowed myself to feel hurt.

O Jesus, I thank you for all your thought for me even when your body lay in the tomb. I do not deserve your care, Lord. I have often been thinking of myself rather than of you when I have been apparently working for you. Help me, Lord, to put

myself aside and to be whole-hearted in my service of you. This morning, when you come to me in the Holy Sacrament of your Body and Blood, fill me with love of you. Make me generous to you, dear Lord, especially in the Sacrament of the Altar.

Aspiration.—Jesus, grant me the grace to do everything for love of you.

XIX

The New Sepulchre

Facts in our Lord's Life

WHEN Joseph of Arimathea had spent his care on the body of our Lord, he was in his fervour delighted to offer Him yet another kindness. He had, as is the manner of the rich, prepared for himself a tomb. It had cost him much labour and no little expense to have the chamber hewn out of the rock for the reception of his own body when God should take his soul. This also he would sacrifice. It was not much to offer out of his abundance, and yet our Lord blessed him for his sacrifice, for his thoughtfulness. How our Lord loved poverty ! He would be beholden to Joseph for His shroud and His tomb ! Joseph was doing a personal and temporary service to our Lord, for

He was to use the tomb for a very short time. Nevertheless Joseph's present was one which was to be held in honour during all time. He little knew all that his gift was to mean to the Church. So our little gifts are valuable far beyond their own worth if they are made with love of our Lord. They are of value not for a time only but for eternity.

Facts in my own Life

How hard I find it to give up anything which I have prepared for myself, for my own use ! "I cannot give this up," I say. And these things are so small ! How I grudge a little time necessary to prepare fitly for Him in Holy Communion ; a little extra instruction to prepare the children in school, or a little loss of ease when I am called to see the poor. I know that my Lord values any little sacrifice that I make, but He values it much more when it is made promptly and without a murmur.

O Jesus, I thank you for your kindness in showing me little ways in which I can give you something which you value. Would that I had the courage to give you all that you require of me ! Let me give you all, Lord, without any reserve. Grant me the grace not to keep anything back. When I do so I know that I am mean indeed : it is always something I have attached myself to, something I call my own. Take also this, dear Lord. I am not rich like Joseph of Arimathea, but I am rich in having something that you desire. I will give it to you, Lord, with my whole heart. Do you use my little gift and bless me for making it. The more it is my own the more you will value it, Lord, for my sake and bless me. Courage, O my soul, give yourself wholly to your Lord and your God.

Aspiration.—My Lord and my All !

XX

“ Nicodemus also came ”*Facts in our Lord's Life*

EVERY detail of our Lord's burial is given by the Evangelists. During our Lord's life many things are left to the pious imagination of the faithful, but here every little detail is given. This is the second time we meet Nicodemus in the Gospel. At the very beginning of our Lord's preaching he came by night for fear of the Jews. He was attracted by the miracles our Lord worked, and he came to inquire into His new doctrine. No doubt he had often listened to our Lord during the interval ; he had followed His Passion and had become devoted to Him. Now he is ready to pay all due honour to our Lord's body as far as he is permitted, and therefore he brings a large

quantity of costly material for its preservation. Our Lord did not need these attentions, for of His own power He could and actually did keep that sacred body incorrupt during the time it was in the tomb. Nevertheless, He did not refuse to have these pious attentions shown to Him.

Facts in my own Life

I am anxious to be what I call practical—not to do more than is necessary for those about me, who are, as St. Paul says, "the body of Christ." I see now that my good Lord is willing to accept many attentions which are not necessary. When the poor ask for an alms I am ready to find an excuse for not helping them—willing to see that a little sacrifice asked of me is not for their good or for the good of the people in general. This is not our Lord's way of acting. He is not only willing that I should pay attention to and make sacrifices for the poor, but He

takes whatever I do for them as if it were done to Himself.

O Jesus, how kind it is of you to leave us those in serving whom we may serve you ! As you are with us to the end of the world, so you have told us that we have the poor always with us. Let me see you, Lord, in the person of your poor. I have not been careful in the past. I have not seen you but only the dirt and squalor of the poor, as Nicodemus without the faith you had given him might have seen only your dead body. Give me also the same faith, that I may believe you when you tell me that what I do for the poor I do for you. I have little that I can give, but at least I will give what I can with faith and with love to you. Let me trust you, Lord !

Aspiration.—Jesus, poor for my sake, give me the grace to be good to the poor for your sake.

XXI

Our Lord's Burial*Facts in our Lord's Life*

OUR Lord was always most particular to keep the law, though He was in no way subject to it. Thus He would be circumcised, though the sin of Adam could not stain Him. Again, He would be offered in the Temple, though He had offered Himself to His Father in the first instant of His conception. He would go up to the Temple for the great feasts, though He Himself was the object of the adoration paid to God at those very festivals. He would observe the law of the Sabbath, though He was Lord of the Sabbath. Even when He was dead He would not forget the law, and would be buried close to Calvary, so that the

trouble of taking His body to a distance might not interfere with the due celebration of the Pasch.

Facts in my own Life

The first thing I consider is my own convenience, and I make a martyr of myself if the law interferes with my liberty. I use the law no doubt in my criticism of others as though I had the greatest respect for it ; but when I am inconvenienced myself I am easily led to murmur, and if I submit I do so with a bad grace. In the case also of rules laid down for my own guidance I easily put them aside for any present pleasure which they would interfere with. I am ready to find excuses to keep me from being punctual at Mass ; careless in foreseeing difficulties and in avoiding them when they are foreseen. I judge others by so different a standard from that I follow in my own practice. I know that if others were to behave to me as

I sometimes do towards them I should feel just cause of complaint.

O Jesus, I thank you for your kindness in bringing this—my negligence—to my mind. I see how particular you were, Lord, how exact. Teach me to be submissive after your example. Let me see that the law to which you have subjected me is the manifestation of your will in my regard. Grant me the grace to honour all law by being exact in the performance—exact in time, exact in all that the law enjoins.

Aspiration.—Jesus, rule me and guide me always.

XXII

The Guard set over the Sepulchre*Facts in our Lord's Life*

THOUGH our Lord was dead He was still an object of hate and of fear to the Jews. The common consolation was not to be allowed to His friends: the tomb must be carefully guarded. Therefore, they went to Pilate, and strove to arouse his fears. They told him that Jesus had said that He would rise on the third day. The report of the graves being opened upon the death of our Lord had, no doubt, been carried to Pilate. The times were extraordinary, and it was necessary that every precaution should be taken, otherwise His disciples might come and take His body away and proclaim Him risen; then the name of this seducer, who was no friend to Cæsar,

would be used by His disciples to rouse the whole nation. Pilate, however, would not help them. Why should they not use the few armed servants that the chief priests were allowed to retain ? The chief priests sent at once to the sepulchre their own guards, and they sealed the stone, made all secure, and then set a watch.

Facts in my own Life

Just as the Jews were afraid of the influence of our Lord, so have I at times been afraid of His voice. I have been glad that He did not call me to what was hard, to action which might have brought me annoyance. And He has allowed me to put a guard of indifference over His tomb. I have thought that I might disregard the fear that still remained with me—the fear that I was shirking His will, that I was not quite safe, and in His goodness all my guard was of no avail.

O Jesus, I thank you that you have

broken through the tomb ; that you have spoken to me once more. Speak to me again, dear Lord, this morning. Give me the courage to listen to your voice and to follow your leading. Let me know your will and have the courage necessary to fulfil it. This very morning, dear Lord, speak to me in Holy Communion. Rise again in my heart. I have greatly neglected your voice in the past. In your goodness let me hear it again.

Aspiration.—“ Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.”

XXIII

The Holy Women

Facts in our Lord's Life

WHILST the holy women were waiting for the dawn of the day after the Sabbath, our Lord's pure soul, having left His body in obedience to the will of His Father, had gone to comfort the faithful souls in Limbo. He had Himself brought them the tidings of their speedy release. His loving kindness did not allow Him to forget these patient souls, but having comforted them and revived their hope of heaven His soul returned with great joy to His body, and He came forth from the tomb. Almost as soon as He had risen Mary Magdalen came with one of the other holy women, and she was rewarded by the vision of the angel who had rolled away the stone from the sepulchre. His

message to them was one of confidence : “ Fear not, for I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for He is risen as He said. Come and see the place where the Lord was laid. And going quickly, tell ye His disciples that He is risen.” Our Lord wishes all those who are seeking Him to have great confidence. He knows that we seek Him.

Facts in my own Life

I often cease to have this reasonable confidence in God. I allow fear to hinder my work for Him—fear that our Lord may not want me to communicate so often ; fear that my confessor may not understand that I am only half in earnest. And yet if I am asked, I know that I wish to serve my Lord. I am lazy, indeed, and careless ; but I do want to be of use to Him, and I let small fears prevent me.

O Lord Jesus, I thank you for this lesson of confidence. I have lost much

from the want of trust in you. Teach me this very day to believe in your constant love and care. Teach me to be on the look out for occasions to serve you as soon as it begins to dawn. Mary Magdalen had waited patiently, as these poor souls in Limbo had waited for you. How glad they must have been to have you ! Make me also glad to have you in Holy Communion. How cold I am, Lord ! and yet in spite of my coldness I will not fear, but will wait your own time, when you will certainly reward me if only I am faithful.

Aspiration.—“Fear not—I know you seek Jesus.”

XXIV

Mary Magdalen and the Disciples*Facts in our Lord's Life*

ST. MARY MAGDALEN was prompt to deliver the message of the angel. Her heart was full of sorrow, for she had hoped to render some further service to the body of our Lord, and she had been shown the empty sepulchre. He was not there to receive her adoration. Still, in spite of her sorrow she was ready to be busy about His work. This promptness was rewarded by our Lord later on. He would teach us a great lesson that His friends, those who are dear to Him, must not allow their own sorrow and depression to stand in the way of work that they can do for others.

Facts in my own Life

When in trouble I often bury myself in myself and forget that others have to be considered, that others may depend on me, that I am not alone. I see from this message given to St. Mary Magdalen that our Lord wishes me to remember the needs of others even when I myself am full of grief or pain. I have thought at such times that people about me were unfeeling, and the thought has embittered me and made my sorrow or my pain greater. Our Lord would have me see that care and thought for others will enable me to bear my own troubles better, and turn a time which hitherto I have not used for Him into an occasion of good to my neighbour.

O Jesus, how kind it is of you to show me these little ways of serving you ! You are so often showing me how I may forget myself and think more of you and your friends, and I am so slow to learn

the lesson. I see it is not love of you which makes me so self-centred. I see it is not for this you send me sorrow, but rather to teach me that your work is always before me, and that if I will I may forget myself a little and do some small thing in your service. If you send me trial again, dear Lord, let me not forget this lesson. This day in Holy Communion help me so to be filled with your care and your love, that I may learn to busy myself about your interests, even though I feel only fit to nurse my own grievances.

Aspiration.—Jesus, for love of you, never let me forget your work.

XXV

The Disciples at the Sepulchre

Facts in our Lord's Life

As soon as St. Peter heard from Mary Magdalen that the sepulchre was empty, he and St. John ran to it. John, the younger man, arrived first but dared not enter. Peter when he came to the place did not hesitate but went into the tomb, St. John following him, and they saw the winding-sheet and the rest of the linen that had been wrapped about the body of our Lord all carefully folded.

Our Lord did not reward them by showing Himself to them ; He allowed them simply to see that He had risen to satisfy themselves that the message which Mary Magdalen had brought to them was true ; and having satisfied themselves they returned to their home. Neither of

them expected to be favoured by seeing Him. Our Lord would have us learn not to ask special favours for ourselves. They were willing to wait till He should think best to reveal Himself. Each of them had much to do—St. John to comfort our Lady, and St. Peter to confirm the Apostles and keep them in readiness for our Lord's visit to them. They had been promised that He would see them in Galilee.

Facts in my own Life

I have expected to be treated in a special way. I have lost heart if my negligence during the day was punished by coldness at my prayers. I have thought that sudden fervour might be given to me though I had been unfaithful and careless when fidelity would have cost me little. I have not been content to take the simple will to do my best as a sign of God's love, but have asked for other, not greater but more showy

favours. I have wanted to feel that my Lord is with me and is pleased with me when I know that I must rest most of my spiritual life on faith. I know that I must trust Him often and go forward with my work when my weakness yearns for just a small sign of His favour, and He in His wisdom refuses to grant my desire.

O Jesus, I thank you for this lesson in the person of your Beloved Disciple and your Chosen Vicar upon earth. I have left you as St. John did ; I have denied you as St. Peter did, and it is good of you to allow me to serve you, however poorly. I will try to take just what you give me, only do not let me leave you again, never allow me to deny you.

Aspiration.—Jesus, do with me as you will.

XXVI

Mary at the Sepulchre*Facts in our Lord's Life*

WHEN the Apostles came to the sepulchre in answer to the message given to them by St. Mary Magdalen, she followed them. When they had seen all that our Lord would show them they went away to their homes. Mary stood without, weeping. The opening of the cave in which our Lord had been laid was low down, and she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre, and she saw two angels, one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had been laid.

The disciples had been within, but had seen only the linen cloths. The poor penitent was allowed to see the angels, who were keeping guard. They say to

her : "Woman, why weepest thou?" She in all simplicity answered, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." The angels were full of sympathy for her, and no doubt were shown to her by our Lord to prepare her for the manifestation of Himself with which He was about to favour her.

Facts in my own Life

I have allowed sadness to interfere with my love of God, and to prevent me from effort to seek Him in my prayer and other work of my soul. My first impulse is to say I do not feel inclined to pray ; I can do no good ; I am not in a proper state. The real fact is that my sorrow or, sadness makes me think of myself and of the annoyance caused to me, to lessen instead of redoubling my efforts to submit all to God. Magdalen, indeed, weeps, but she does not cease to look for our Lord.

O Jesus, it is good of you to teach me through St. Mary Magdalen how you would have me behave when you seem to withdraw yourself from me. How often I have lost heart and ceased to seek you ! How often I have complained to you, my good and kind Lord, that you were not kind to me. Teach me to sorrow indeed, but never to lose heart. Teach me to look for you and never to be satisfied till I find you. Let me not be satisfied with any other thing but you ; let me not even pause in my search. Come to me, dear Lord, this morning in the Holy Sacrament and console me and fill my heart with courage.

Aspiration.—Jesus, my God and my all !

XXVII

Jesus shows Himself to Magdalen*Facts in our Lord's Life*

As soon as St. Mary Magdalen was aware that our Lord was not in the sepulchre she turned round, and coming out of the sepulchre saw Jesus standing, but she knew not that it was Jesus. Our Lord said to her : "Woman, why weepest thou ? whom seekest thou ?" He used the same words as the angels, but adds the second question. She, thinking it was a gardener, said to Him : "Sir, if thou hast taken Him away tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away."

Our Lord did not reveal Himself to her immediately, in order that the disappointment she might feel at not finding Him might make her joy all the greater after-

wards. As soon as she had made her demand she turned away to look for her Lord. As she turned our Lord called her by her name, "Mary!" and at once she recognized Him—the object of all her search, the completion of all her desires. With all the fervour of her love she greeted Him : "Rabboni!" that is, "Master."

Facts in my own Life

I have not yet appreciated the necessity of that close personal love of our Lord which was a characteristic of St. Mary Magdalen. I fancy at times it would have been easier for me if I had known our Lord as she did. I have seen that she was wilful and flighty naturally, and that I find much in myself to remind me of the poor wilful sinner, but little that resembles her complete abandonment to the influence of my Lord. I call Him my Master: do I allow myself to

listen to Him and to follow Him without reserve ?

O Jesus, call me by my name and let me hear you. Alas, I have so often heard you in Holy Communion and you are always asking me for some little act of submission to your will ! I have not been whole-hearted in my acknowledgement of your rights over me. Come to me this morning, dear Lord, and let me see that there must be no reserves in my abandonment, no holding back in my following.

Aspiration.—Rabboni ! Master !

XXVIII

The Walk to Emmaus

Facts in our Lord's Life

THE same day—that is, on the day of the Resurrection—two of the disciples walked to Emmaus, and their conversation was of the events of the past few days. As they talked Jesus Himself drew near and joined them, and they did not know that it was Jesus. With great kindness He questioned them as though he were a stranger. They told Him of their ambition ; they had hoped that it was He who would redeem Israel. They told Him also of the message of the holy women, but not of their own want of belief. He then opened to them the Scriptures, and showed them plainly that all the things that had happened had been foretold by the prophets.

As they drew near to Emmaus He made as though He would go further, but they constrained Him to come in with them. Whilst He was at table with them He took bread and blessed and brake and gave to them, and they at once knew Him and He vanished from their sight. Then they said to one another : "Was not our heart burning within us whilst He was speaking in the way and opened to us the Scriptures ?"

When we least suspect it our Lord is with us, when our thoughts are upon Him and we strive to gain a true knowledge of His life and of His teaching.

Facts in my own Life

I have found it interesting to occupy my mind about many things which were not connected with the life of our Lord and my own spiritual life. My want of faith has blinded my eyes so often that I did not recognize Him in the way, and I have been inclined to put forward my

own unconsidered thoughts, and to complain of the dulness of my heart in meditation and prayer. All the time my Lord was only too glad to let my heart burn if I would but recognize and believe in His presence and in His care of me.

O Jesus, give me the grace to recognize you in prayer, and to have the courage to persevere even when it is dull work. Let me see you, dear Lord, in your care and love for me, especially in Holy Communion. Never let it be my fault that my heart does not burn within me at such times. This morning when you come to me, let the eyes of my soul be opened that I may know you in the breaking of bread. Let me constrain you to stay with me ; and even when you have left me let me walk in the new strength which comes to me from your blessed presence.

*Aspiration.—*Jesus, open my eyes that I may know Thee.

XXIX

“Jesus stood in the midst”*Facts in our Lord's Life*

THE two hurried back from Emmaus with their joyful news, and they found the disciples gathered together. They were greeted with the further news that our Lord had risen indeed, and had appeared to Simon. No particulars are given of this visit of our Lord to Simon Peter. We may well picture for ourselves the humility and zeal of the Apostle, and the kindness and forgivingness of the Master.

The disciples returned from Emmaus were full of their experience, and were anxious to impart to the rest the courage and joy which had filled their hearts. As they narrated all that had happened and the fact that they knew Him in the

breaking of bread, Jesus stood in the midst, saying, "Peace be to you; it is I, fear not." The Apostles and disciples were overstrung with all the wonders which had happened to them, and were startled and full of fear, thinking they saw a spirit. When our Lord had calmed them and proved to them that it was He who was present before them, He opened their understanding and gave them once more the commission to preach in His name among all nations.

Facts in my own Life

I have lost much in my life because of my foolish fears. Fears as to my confessions, fears as to my earnestness have prevented me from that trust and confidence in God by which alone I can do work for Him. Even when He has told me by the mouth of His priest that I am to put fear aside and go on bravely I have not believed. Yet I know even from my own experience that the peace

in which I am to possess my soul can only be founded on a deep trust in my Lord's goodness.

O Jesus, my good, kind Master, give me also this peace which you brought to your disciples. I will try to trust you more, Lord, and to believe your words spoken to me by the mouth of your ministers. I will trust you, dear Lord, especially in Holy Communion. Do not let my fear keep me from coming to you.

*Aspiration.—*Jesus, prince of peace, give me your own peace.

XXX

Thomas was not with them*Facts in our Lord's Life*

ST. THOMAS is mentioned in the Holy Gospels as one who did not readily believe. He was not present when our Lord appeared to the disciples. After our Lord's departure Thomas returned to the little band and they told him all that had happened. He did not believe ; he would not take it on their word. He himself must see and be personally convinced or he would not believe. Again on the eighth day the disciples were gathered together, and this time Thomas was with them. Our Lord condescended to come to them again. Greeting them as before : "Peace be to you," He turned at once to Thomas and allowed him to

convince himself of the reality of the Resurrection. Thomas acknowledged Him—" My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus said to him : " Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed."

If we are to make progress in the spiritual life we must trust not only our Lord but those to whom He has committed the guidance of our souls. If we are ready to do His will He will not allow us to be guided amiss. But if we take our souls into our own hands and are more anxious to do our own will than the will of God there is no depth of delusion that we may not fall into.

Facts in my own Life

I, too, have thought at times that the precepts of the saints and of holy men were not meant for me, and I have tried to go my own way. There have been

methods and even principles which did not appeal to me. I have failed to follow ; I thought I saw a better way. The guidance given me relying on mortification and self-denial has appeared to me antiquated, and because of my wilfulness our Lord has let me have my own way, but He has not shown Himself to me. He has let me see after failure that it is more blessed to believe though I do not see, than to go my own way though I seem to see.

O Jesus, how kind you have been to me, to show me my fault and my danger ! I will wait your time, dear Lord, when you see fit to make all things plain to me. I know that I can trust you. I do not ask that you should make me see all, but only that you will not allow me to be led away from you. When you come to me in Holy Communion, dear Lord, confirm my faith. Make it strong as that of St. Thomas, who went forth after your glorious Ascension to do great and noble

work for you. Let me work for you with the strength and blessing which come from faith.

Aspiration.—My Lord and my God !

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